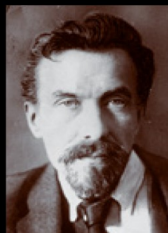


Was There an Alternative? 1923–1927



**TROTSKYISM:
A Look Back
Through the Years**
Vadim Z. Rogovin



Was There an Alternative?

1923–1927

Trotskyism: A Look Back Through the
Years

Vadim Z. Rogovin

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Was There an Alternative? Trotskyism: A Look Back Through the Years

Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin

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About the Author

Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin (10 May 1937–18 September 1998) was a Doctor of Philosophical Sciences and leading researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. He is the author of 250 scholarly works, including eight monographs on problems of social policy, the history of social thought and the history of political movements in the former USSR. From 1991 to 1998, Rogovin wrote a seven-volume study, *Was There an Alternative?*, which examines the struggle of the Left Opposition, led by Leon Trotsky, against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet regime. This book is the first volume in the series.

Before his untimely death in September 1998, Rogovin presented lectures all over the world about the socialist-based opposition to the Stalinist regime.

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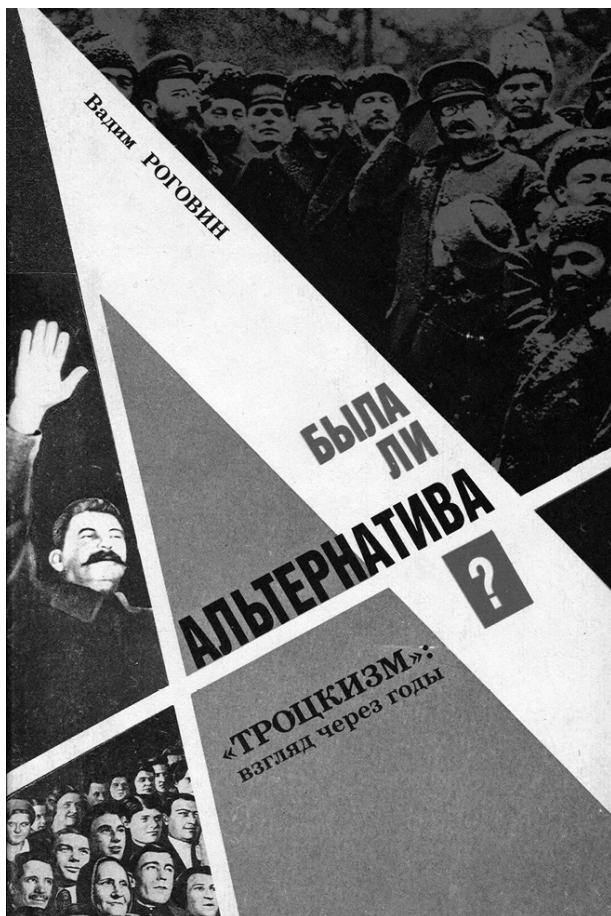
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*The Russian edition of Vadim Rogovin, *Byla li al'ternativa?*: "Trotskizm": Vzglyad cherez gody, Moskva: TERRA, 1992.*

Foreword

This book was published by Vadim Rogovin in Moscow in the fall of 1992, slightly less than one year after the Soviet Union had been dissolved. It is the first volume of what would become a seven-volume study of the struggle of the Left Opposition, both inside the Soviet Union and abroad, as it fought the Stalinist degeneration of the workers' state established after the October Revolution in 1917.

This first volume raises the question: "Was There an Alternative to Stalinism?" It studies the rise of the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky in 1923, and ends with the expulsion of Trotsky and his supporters at the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927. The succeeding volumes examine the history of the resistance to Stalinism up through Trotsky's assassination in August 1940 and the outbreak of World War II.

Rogovin began collecting material about the inner-party struggle as a teenager, soon after Stalin's death in 1953. During the "Thaw" in 1956, signaled by Khrushchev's famous secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February, Rogovin's hopes were raised that a true history of this period could be written. But Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was partial; many of the most odious falsifications of history remained.

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, relatively bleak years dominated on the historical front. Trotsky's name was taboo. None of his works were readily available in the Soviet Union, and Rogovin could not assume that he would ever be able to publish the history he yearned to write.

After Gorbachev began the process of "perestroika" in 1985, one of the slogans of that time was "glasnost" (openness). Official Communist Party

publications started to publish documents of previously banned topics in Soviet history. Soon a flood of these documents was published in journals, newspapers, and books, often in extraordinary numbers (the relatively obscure newspaper, *Arguments and Facts*, reached a press run of 33 million!).

Rogovin devoured this material, thoroughly assimilated it, and began to write his volumes with incredible honesty, courage, and speed. By 1992, this first volume appeared.

In the same year, Rogovin established contact with the International Committee of the Fourth International and forged a close relationship that played a critical role in the development of his historical project.

In a memorial tribute to Vadim Rogovin, delivered in December 1998, David North described the nature and significance of the historian's relationship with the International Committee:

For most of Vadim's life it had not been possible for him to discuss openly his Trotskyist convictions, let alone participate in the work of the Fourth International. Similarly, our movement had for decades upheld the legacy of Trotsky's struggle, without the possibility of establishing contact with genuine Marxists within the Soviet Union. Yet, despite the formidable obstacles that were the product of unfavorable historical conditions, the trajectories of Vadim Rogovin and the Fourth International had finally, after separate voyages of more than a half-century, merged into the same orbital path.

Discussions between Vadim and the International Committee began in the late spring of 1992. Initially, most of our exchanges took place through the new medium of e-mail. With Fred serving as our interlocutor, we exchanged, though in a somewhat restricted manner, ideas and proposals for the development of literary and political work. In October 1992, Vadim met briefly with Comrade Peter Schwarz during a short visit to Berlin. In February 1993, during a seminar in Kiev on the history of the International Committee, Vadim and I met for the first time. The discussions that we held over that weekend established a pattern that persisted during the years to come: We talked, debated, argued, disagreed, agreed, laughed, and made plans. In the course of further meetings held in Moscow in 1993 and early 1994, we discussed in detail the development of Vadim's historical cycle. As I have already said, the basic outline of the work had been developed by Vadim over many years of study and thought. And yet, as a consequence of his discussions with the International Committee, the intellectual and political scope of this work broadened immensely. Even after the initial discussions, Vadim decided

that it was necessary for him to recast and rewrite his first volume. I do not mean to suggest that Vadim owed his ideas to the International Committee. The dialectical movement of his thought cannot be understood in such terms. Rather, Vadim's creativity was stimulated by discussion, which activated his imagination and aroused within his consciousness new ideas. At first, Vadim had believed that his project would require four volumes. The impact of his collaboration with the International Committee found its most direct expression in the fact that the scale of the project grew to seven volumes.

In May 1994, Rogovin was diagnosed with cancer. The prognosis was not good — he was initially given six months to live. The tragic news intensified Rogovin's resolve to complete his cycle. He also seemed to draw strength and inspiration from the International Committee's organization of a series of lectures tours in the United States, Britain, Germany and Australia. His intense preparation for the lectures and the lively exchanges with the audiences who attended them was, for Vadim, a source of fresh ideas. Returning from these lectures, Rogovin resumed his writing with an intensity that astounded his oncologists, family, and newly found collaborators.

Having decided to rewrite the first volume, Rogovin welcomed the opportunity to include excerpts from new documents that had appeared since the first edition. He both included new material and excluded some passages that he thought might distract his international readers. This new edition compares favorably to the original Russian version in print. Rogovin worked assiduously on this and other volumes until virtually the day before he died, on 18 September 1998.

In his tribute to Rogovin, North offered this assessment of *Was There an Alternative to Stalinism*:

Vadim's pursuit of objective historical truth constituted the essential foundation and purpose of his intellectual life. The problem of objective truth was, for Vadim, not that of an abstract theoretical standard that was arbitrarily imposed upon the subject of historical research. It was, rather, intrinsic to the subject itself. For Vadim, that subject was the history of the political struggles within the Soviet Communist Party and the Communist International between 1922, one year before the founding of the Left Opposition, and 1940, the year of the assassination of Leon Trotsky by an agent of Stalin's NKVD. His overriding intellectual task and moral responsibility was to extract the

objective truth of this critical historical period from beneath the vast edifice of lies that had been erected by Stalin and his successors, who were—even before the term was invented—the foremost practitioners of post-modernist historiography. If, as post-modernist theoreticians insist, there exists no necessary relationship between history and a scientifically-verifiable objective truth—and, to continue, if historical narratives are merely imagined and invented—then the accounts of Soviet history given by Andrei Vyshinsky at the three Moscow trials are as legitimate as any other. The various versions of Soviet history presented in different editions of officially authorized encyclopedias are, within this intellectually debased framework, not to be rejected as lies; rather, they are to be rationalized and justified as alternative “imaginings” of the past. The apologists of post-modernism might argue that this is not their intention; but ideas have a logic of their own.

Vadim Rogovin understood that the Soviet tragedy was embedded in the disorientation and deadening of historical consciousness. The political immaturity and bewilderment that characterized the response of the Soviet people to the events of the 1980s and 1990s, their inability to find a progressive response to the crisis in their society, was, above all, the outcome of decades of historical falsifications. It was impossible to understand the present without real knowledge of the past. To the extent that the Russian working class believed that Stalinism was the inevitable product of socialism, and that the tragic course of Soviet history flowed inexorably from the revolution of October 1917, it was politically disarmed and could see no alternative to the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism. The great question posed by Vadim Rogovin—Was there an alternative to Stalinism?—is, certainly, fundamental to an understanding of the history of the Soviet Union. But the ramifications of this question extend far beyond the borders of the former USSR, and they are of critical relevance not only to our understanding of the past but to our vision of the future. Within the context of his examination of the Soviet past Vadim Rogovin grappled with the essential experiences and lessons of the twentieth century. That is why the works of Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin are of world importance.

Rogovin's achievement as a historian is monumental. He was not able to see the many volumes of documents that have appeared in the former Soviet Union since his death. These include thousands of pages on the NEP, the inner-party struggle, collectivization and industrialization, the Comintern, the Great Terror, and the outbreak of war. Yet what he wrote, based on what he managed to see and use in his analysis of these complex

events, stands the test of time. Although published in Russian in 1992, and revised in 1996, little in this book needs to be changed to be historically accurate.

Given the new socialist wave that Rogovin felt was inevitable, he called for a profound understanding of the historical lessons of the past, in order to avoid fatal mistakes in the coming political battles. This requires a study of the political and ideological heritage of Marxists of the 1930s, many of whom are unknown to the readers Rogovin anticipated, but whose history assumes urgent significance today. To aid the reader, brief biographies of many of these Marxists have been appended to the book.

More volumes are planned to appear in English, joining the three others that have already been published by Mehring Books. German translations of the first six completed volumes are already available at Mehring Verlag.

Note from the Translator

Transliterating Russian names and other words from Cyrillic always involves compromises. Throughout the main body of the text, I have adopted a modified version of the system used in the *Handbook of Russian Literature* (edited by Victor Terras, Yale University Press, 1985). Thus, the familiar “-skii” ending of many surnames is rendered as “-sky.” Soft and hard signs are omitted (Raskolnikov, not Raskol’nikov), except in footnotes. Where names are of German origin, I have usually retained the Russian form (Goltsman, not Holtzmann). Other names that have been popularized over the years are used in their more familiar form, even if this violates strict transliteration norms (Zinoviev, not Zinov’ev; Barmine, not Barmin; Nicolaevsky, not Nikolaevsky). Names that begin with the Cyrillic “Е”, “Ю” or “Я” are rendered as “Ye” (Yezhov), “Yu” (Yudin) or “Ya” (Yaroslavsky). An exception to this is Esenin, more commonly accepted than Yesenin. Names in the index usually include the patronymic, unless it could not be found.

A glossary of many of the acronyms and terms from the Soviet period follows the last chapter. For brevity’s sake, I have used some of these terms in the text (e.g., Gosplan, kolkhoz), even though they might seem strange to the non-Russian reader.

When it comes to territorial terms, I have left several in transliterated form, while adding them to the glossary (*oblast*, *okrug*, *krai*), since there is no consistent equivalent to territories in English-speaking countries.

Where appropriate, I designate economic years in the following way: 1928/1929, which is explained in the glossary.

Vadim Rogovin often inserted parenthetical comments, signed with his initials. I have retained them in parentheses. All unsigned notes in square brackets belong to the translator, not to the author.

Some observations about the footnotes: I have retained the original citations that Rogovin provided in Cyrillic. If there is an available English translation, I have often provided a citation for it. Otherwise, a simple translation of the original Russian citation is given.

As is customary for texts on Soviet history, Lenin's quotations are usually from the fifth Soviet edition of his *Полное собрание сочинений* [Complete Collected Works], indicated as ПСС [in English references as PSS]; English translations, however, are from the fourth edition of his *Collected Works*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1960–1970, indicated as CW. I have often modified these English translations slightly, corresponding to more recent usage.

Stalin's quotations are from a reprint of the thirteen-volume English edition produced by the Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1953–1955.

For many of Trotsky's works, English references are easily found. I often cite them so that the reader can compare them with my own variant. With Trotsky's unfinished *Stalin* (which was cut short by his assassination), matters are more complicated. Only the first six chapters of the English translation by Charles Malamuth were checked by Trotsky. The later chapters included interpolations by Malamuth which distorted what Trotsky would have written to such a degree that Natalia Sedova, Trotsky's widow, tried to stop its publication altogether.

The Russian émigré historian, Yuri Felshtinsky published a Russian edition of the Stalin biography in 1985, which contained the seven Russian chapters that Trotsky had corrected. Felshtinsky then included excerpts from Trotsky's archives that would have been included in a completed edition, without Malamuth's interpolations. Felshtinsky's work became the basis for the Russian edition published in Moscow in 1991 that Rogovin later cites.

In providing a reference to an extant English translation of *Stalin*, I have opted for the edition translated and edited in 2016 by Alan Woods.

Although much of what Malamuth had offered is accepted by Woods, some of it is altered. More importantly, Woods supplied over 80,000 words of text not provided in the earlier Malamuth edition. Finding passages that correspond to the Russian edition Rogovin used is complicated by the way Woods rearranged some passages; occasionally, contiguous paragraphs are now found on two or three different pages. In a few places, I could not find the continuation of a quotation begun by Woods. Given those issues, the Woods edition is an improvement over the earlier Malamuth and should help the reader in understanding Trotsky's views in the last year of his life.

Thanks to James Goodwin for assistance in translation of selected chapters that were provided in draft form on the basis of consultations with the author and have been revised and updated here for publication.

A note on the illustrations: many of the photographs and images come from the journal *Prozhektor* [Searchlight], edited by Voronsky and Bukharin in the 1920s. Some of the images have rarely been seen since they were originally printed, because they were largely erased from Soviet history by Stalinist censors. Both Voronsky and Bukharin fell victim to the Great Terror in 1937 and 1938, as did many of the people contained in the photographs.

(– F. C.)

Introduction

Every great revolution presents its contemporaries and their descendants fundamental historical questions that continue to be debated for decades. The most basic question posed by the October Revolution and its consequences concerns the relationship between Bolshevism and Stalinism.

From the 1930s through the 1980s, Soviet historiography, which experienced suffocating administrative pressure more than any other social science, offered a straightforward answer to this question. Avoiding the very term “Stalinism,” it depicted the entire post-October development of Soviet society as the living incarnation of the guiding principles of Marxism-Leninism. Any considerations placing this postulate in doubt were stigmatized as the expression of anti-communism and anti-Sovietism. So many myths and falsifications were amassed along the way, that among the investigations of the post-October period appearing in the USSR since the end of the 1920s, not a single one may be called genuinely scientific.

A reconsideration of all Soviet history in recent years has posed to researchers a fundamental question: why did the historical soil created by the October Revolution yield such a monstrous phenomenon as Stalinism, which has discredited the idea of socialism in the eyes of millions of people throughout the world?

Evidently, there are only two possible answers to this question. The first suggests that the development of the socialist revolution into the terrorist dictatorship of Stalin was historically natural and inevitable, that

there were no political alternatives to this development within Bolshevism. According to this interpretation, then, all the interim stages between October 1917 and the consolidation of power by the Stalinist regime should be understood as insignificant zigzags along a path which the October Revolution was fatally predestined to follow, and the inner-party struggle of the 1920s was therefore merely an historical episode, any outcome of which would have led to something similar to Stalinism.

The other interpretation proceeds from the belief that Stalinism was not the inevitable, logical result of the October Revolution, that its victory was in a sense historically contingent, that within Bolshevism there was a strong political movement which offered a real alternative to Stalinism, and that to crush this movement was the primary function of the Stalinist terror.

In order to provide scientific support to any of these theses, it is necessary to rely, above all, on as complete a collection of historical facts as possible. As Friedrich Engels wrote, “In any science, incorrect notions ... are, in the last resort, incorrect notions of correct facts; the facts remain, even if the notions based upon them turn out to be false.”¹

In history, more often than in any other science, incorrect notions of true facts have turned out to be not so much the result of sincere error, as much as the conscious or unconscious fulfillment of political demands. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that no period prior to the twentieth century has witnessed the formation of such a multitude of historical falsifications based on the tendentious over-emphasis and interpretation of certain historical facts and the suppression of others. Never before have historical falsifications served to such a degree as an ideological weapon to deceive people in order to carry out reactionary political policies. Never before have there been so many ideological amalgams based upon the arbitrary identification of completely different historical phenomena, separated both in time and in space.

As it applies to political life, the concept of an “amalgam” (in its literal meaning — a fusion of diverse metals) was first used during the epoch of the Great French Revolution. Following the counter-revolutionary coup on 27 July 1794 (the ninth of Thermidor in the second year, according to

the Republican calendar), the term came to designate the Thermidorian methods of fabricating all kinds of “conspiracies”: sitting next to each other on the defendants’ bench were monarchists, revolutionary Jacobins, criminals, and others. This was done in order to commingle the guilty and the innocent and, ultimately, to deceive the people, while inciting an anti-Jacobin hysteria.

By the end of the 1920s, the Left Opposition was arguing that Stalin and his henchmen had armed themselves with the method of the amalgam in order to accuse oppositionists of collaborating with anti-Soviet forces. In the 1930s, Trotsky spoke of the Stalinist amalgams in a broader sense as the provocative identification of Bolsheviks—the opponents of Stalinism—with counter-revolutionary conspirators, terrorists, saboteurs, and the spies of foreign intelligence services. This method served as the primary weapon for deceiving both the Soviet people and the progressive foreign community with the intention of securing their faith in the most horrific and repressive acts against “enemies of the people.” Later, vastly different groups were amalgamated in the same fashion: participants of the White-Guard conspiracies — and ordinary citizens who had suffered for expressing the wrong word; participants in the peasant uprisings of the late 1920s and early 1930s — and the peasants of average means who were “dekulakized,” or dispossessed, on the basis of routine orders; the former landowners of tsarist Russia who despised the October Revolution for removing their privileges — and communists who had dared to pass judgment on the Stalinist leadership; Vlasov supporters, Nazi police recruits — and prisoners of war who had not disgraced themselves by collaborating with Hitler’s forces, but had endured the hell of fascist concentration camps; the organizers and members of the nationalist gangs — and entire peoples who had been subjected to merciless deportation.

No less arbitrary are those “Stalinist amalgams turned inside out” that are circulated by anti-communist forces; they conclude that all the tragic events of post-October history stem from certain characteristics and inadequacies existing from the very beginning within the Bolshevik Party. While exposing similar types of historical interpretations that

arose during discussions in the 1930s about the origins and nature of Stalinism, Trotsky showed that amalgams of this nature are based on idealistic conceptions of the Bolshevik Party as a kind of omnipotent factor in history, operating in empty space, or with the amorphous masses, and never experiencing any opposition from the social milieu or pressure from without.

A significant role in the formation of these versions was played by former orthodox communists who had broken with the communist movement and renounced Marxism under the influence of the tragic events of the 1930s. Their judgments were seized upon by professional Sovietology, which began to develop in the west after the second world war. In the 1940s and 1950s, hundreds of works appeared advancing the idea that Stalinism was a fatal, pre-determined expression of the character of the Bolshevik Party and the October Revolution. “Early” western Sovietologists showed a striking unanimity in their interpretation of the relationship between Bolshevism and Stalinism. As Stephen Cohen writes:

Surviving various methodologies and approaches, the consensus posited an uncomplicated conclusion: no meaningful difference or discontinuity was seen between Bolshevism and Stalinism, which were viewed as being fundamentally the same, politically and ideologically.²

The inculcation of this myth for decades was explained by the following: in epochs of extremely tense political contradictions, the historical generalizations that should emerge from an unbiased analysis of many incontestable and irreversible facts bear, as a rule, the mark of the political sympathies of the researchers. Although western academic Sovietology had access to a significantly greater amount of factual material than Soviet historiography, under conditions of the “cold war” it also fulfilled a definite “social command” and, as a result, suffered from its own ideological blind spots. Only in the 1970s did its more serious representatives reject the “prevailing view that Stalinism was the logical, irresistible outcome of the Bolshevik revolution.”³

It would seem that the exposure of Stalin’s cult of personality at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU should have been conducive to a

similarly productive process in the USSR and led to the destruction of countless historical myths that were propagated by the Stalin school of falsification. However, the first two waves of anti-Stalinist criticism (after the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Party Congresses) directed by Khrushchev — formerly one of the most devoted Stalinists — left the principal myths of the Stalin school intact. In his report at the Twentieth Party Congress “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences,” Khrushchev praised “the great struggle against Trotskyists, rightists, and bourgeois nationalists,” whose policies ostensibly “led to the restoration of capitalism, to capitulation before the world bourgeoisie.” He lauded the role of Stalin in this “necessary” battle “against those who tried to divert the country from the singularly correct Leninist path.”⁴ In accord with such an interpretation of the inner-party struggle, Khrushchev explained away the origin of the “cult of personality” as merely the expression of Stalin’s negative personal qualities, which had supposedly developed only after 1934.

This version was maintained in official propaganda for the entire duration of the Khrushchev “thaw.” After removing Khrushchev from power, the Brezhnev-Suslov leadership placed a ban on all official criticism of Stalinism, thereby restricting the possibility of addressing this theme to mentioning Stalin’s “individual mistakes.” Under these conditions, a critical re-evaluation of the nation’s history could be made only in the illegal self-publications of “samizdat,” or in unsanctioned publications abroad, known as “tamizdat.” The decay of the Brezhnev regime, to a large extent bound up with the inability and unwillingness on the part of this new irremovable leadership to draw lessons from history, deprived the Soviet people of the hopes raised after the Twentieth Congress for a rebirth of socialist principles in politics and ideology.

The stifling ideological atmosphere, which continued to expand during the years of stagnation, produced a yearning among many members of the Soviet intelligentsia to re-evaluate the past on the basis of the traditional amalgams, that is, to the revival of the thesis, “Stalin continues the work of Lenin and the October revolution,” only now with a negative connotation. Whereas Stalinist propaganda depicted the work

of Lenin and its “continuation” as an unbroken chain of historical victories won in the battle against the “enemies of Leninism,” the dissidents of the 1970s and 1980s and the ideologues of the “third wave of Russian emigration” understood all of Soviet history as an unbroken chain of crimes and violent acts carried out against the people by the Bolsheviks.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s works, and especially his artistic work of investigation, *GULag Archipelago*, contributed to the widespread dissemination of this historical interpretation. This genre, which appealed not so much to the historical consciousness as to the emotions of the reader; which relied not so much upon documents, as upon the individual observations of contemporaries, thereby freeing the author from a presentation of facts in their true historical sequence; this very genre, in combination with the artistic talents of Solzhenitsyn, made possible the recognition of this interpretation of history among both the “right” and “left” elements of the Soviet intelligentsia. The continued existence of a multitude of “blank spots” in official historiography assured that Solzhenitsyn’s conception, having demonstrated itself in the eyes of many readers to be a convincing reading of Soviet history, and having suddenly inundated the pages of our journals at the end of the 1980s, became dominant and aggressively irreconcilable to all other views of post-October history.

The brief period, during which the New Economic Policy and the so-called “Bukharin alternative” were extolled, began to yield to the older myth of the Stalinist model of socialism as the only possible means of implementing Marx’s doctrine. Criticism of Stalinism was succeeded by criticism of Marxism and Bolshevism, which in turn received the blame for all the shocks and hardships endured by our country from 1917 right up through today’s all-embracing political and economic crisis. Year after year we have witnessed a barrage of articles in which the roots and sources of Stalinism are sought within the “doctrinal premises” of Marxism, in the ideology and politics of revolutionary Bolshevism, and, finally, in the alleged inherent shortcomings of the socialist idea. Moreover, no new facts, arguments, or conclusive evidence are advanced

in support of this historical interpretation. The interpretation itself, moreover, rests not upon historical research, but rather upon the mere repetition of the basic ideas of White émigré and anti-communist journalism. Objective historical analysis ever more has been sacrificed to political goals, up to ascribing the tragic consequences of the fall of the USSR — and the retreat of its former republics to backward, semi-colonial capitalism — to the heritage of the “Soviet-communist system.”

This interpretation is based upon the traditional anti-communist belief in the “uninterruptedness” of historical development after October 1917, and upon the conception that several distinct episodes or phenomena — which are, in fact, radically different in their socio-political essence — somehow form a series of successive links in a single historical chain. Among the examples included are the October Revolution and the civil war; the violent collectivization and the massive deportation of peasants; and, finally, the falsified show trials and state terror of the late 1930s through the early 1950s. Excluded from this analysis, at the same time, are the events of the greatest importance — events which undermine this apparently solid framework. The October Revolution and the civil war were armed struggles of the masses who supported the Bolsheviks against a coalition of those forces seeking a national, counter-revolutionary restoration and those of foreign intervention. Collectivization was accompanied by a large number of armed peasant uprisings that threatened to grow into a “Russian Vendée” (this, of course, does not remove responsibility from the organizers of violent collectivization and the savage measures implemented under the slogan, “liquidation of the kulaks as a class”). The state terror of the late 1930s through the early 1950s was directed against millions of unarmed people, and carried out — in the manner of the Inquisition — through the fabrication of judicial frame-ups and false “cases,” using torture to obtain forced “confessions” of non-existent crimes.

The amalgamation of all these phenomena rests upon one of their common distinctive features: the use of violence. Yet the character of that violence, the historical conditions under which it was exercised, and the

class nature of those forces against which it was directed — none of these factors are taken into consideration.

The founders of the latest historical set of mythological motifs, who do not wish to see anything in all of post-October history other than violence, construct an imaginary series of executioners and their victims. Among the former they place Lenin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, and Dzerzhinsky as ostensibly the direct predecessors of Stalin, Yagoda, Yezhov, Vyshinsky, and Beria. Among the latter are placed — alongside the innocent victims of the Stalinist terror — the true enemies of the October Revolution, whose activity was expressed in military operations and armed conspiracies. Finally, a third category is constructed: that of the executioner-victims; that is, those Bolsheviks who perished in the years of Stalinism, and who, it is alleged, fatally prepared their own subsequent tragic fate through their participation in the October Revolution and the civil war.

Another old dogma of the Sovietologists is resurrected in precisely the same fashion: the idea that Stalinism is the natural culmination of the Bolshevik tradition. This ideological operation (identifying the political regime established by the October Revolution with the political regime of Stalinism) is also based upon the use of one distinctive feature: the presence of a one-party system, but without comparing the party under Lenin's leadership with the party that existed under Stalin.

The creators of this ideological set of mythological motifs ignore the obvious differences between the ideological and political practice of Bolshevism and that of Stalinism, which, while preserving traditional Marxist terminology and outwardly demonstrating its adherence to Bolshevism, at the same time trampled the essential ideas and destroyed the main principles and values of Bolshevism: social equality, socialist internationalism, and direct rule by the people. Having dismissed the idea of social equality as mere "leftish egalitarianism," Stalinism created new systems of privileges and new — no less striking than in the past — systems of inequality. Stalinism replaced the idea of internationalism with the ideology and practice of great-power chauvinism and hegemonism, and supplanted the idea of the withering away of the state

with the idea of strengthening the state system and practicing complete coercion and force.

The creators of the latest historical amalgams fail to notice one of the most important tendencies of Stalinist Bonapartism: its consistency in persecuting one specific group of its enemies. Let us recall: over the two and a half decades of Stalinist domination, the blows were redirected from certain social groups toward others, and several other persecuted social groups and institutes were suddenly moved into the ranks of the protected and patronized. Thus, the political policy of “routing” the old intelligentsia, having culminated in the early 1930s in a series of fabricated political trials against the “saboteurs” from the ranks of the scientific, technical, and military establishments, gave way — utilizing Stalinist rhetoric — to a policy of “recruitment and protection” of the old specialists. The period of persecuting the church saw the church’s sudden transformation into one of the bulwarks of the Stalinist regime. Even the horrors of “dekulakization” gave way in the mid-1930s to the restoration of civil and political rights of the so-called “disenfranchised” elements, including the victims of “dekulakization.” There existed, in fact, only one category of the victims of Stalinism, toward whom the terrorist policies steadily became more ruthless: that group included rank-and-file communists who had any association with the inner-party oppositions of the 1920s and 1930s.

It is well-known that throughout the duration of the Stalinist regime, any person who dared to possess even a single work of Trotsky’s or of other oppositionists, or who uttered carelessly even a single sympathetic word about them, or who had been “convicted of association”—that is, in collaborative work or comradely relations with any “Trotskyist,” was bound to be subjected to the most severe article of the Stalinist code of justice: “KRTD,” or “counter-revolutionary Trotskyist activity.” The mass character of this type of phenomenon refutes the explanation that it issued solely from Stalin’s personal antipathies; there was obviously something within the ideology of so-called “Trotskyism” during that period which threatened the very existence of the Stalinist regime. Stalin’s fear of “Trotskyism” was so great, that in the course of the campaign to

“liquidate the Trotskyists and all other double-dealers,” he destroyed the entire ruling stratum, which consisted of people who preserved the memory of other, much different Leninist norms in party and state life. As a result of this preventative purge, more people than simply those who had dared at some point to vote for the program of the Left Opposition were reduced to ashes. “Trotskyism” was considered to be any remotely favorable mention of Trotsky (even in private conversation), or any disagreement with one or another concrete action of Stalin’s leadership. Millions of people who did not belong to any inner-party opposition groups, but, on the contrary, who opposed the opposition, either sincerely or through compulsion, nevertheless died possessing the label of “Trotskyist” — the most terrible stigma possible, and one which predominated both in the party and in the country for decades.

Today all the victims of post-October history, be they open opponents of Bolshevism or the innocent prisoners of Stalinism, are called upon to speak on the pages of Soviet publications; however, amidst the enormous flood of memoirs and artistic productions which has inundated the pages of the press over the last several years with accounts of the victims of Stalinism, we, as a rule, never encounter references to the fates of the real “Trotskyists,” that is, the true supporters of the Left Opposition. All of these people, with rare exception, were eliminated long before Stalin’s death, which opened the way for an initial re-evaluation of our tragic past; and for this reason they did not succeed in leaving documented testimony of their views and activities. But even the few things that have been preserved — the works of Trotsky and the “Trotskyists” contained in the eighty issues of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* which appeared abroad from 1929–1941, and the majority of their speeches published in the Soviet press throughout the twenties — remain as before unknown to the Soviet reader. In the present work we will attempt to fill this gap, to study the Soviet reality of the 1920s through the eyes of these people, and to compare their analyses, evaluations, and prognoses with the objective testimony of historical documents.

Such a method of research excludes peremptory arguments and *a priori* conclusions. It presupposes a presentation of historical events in

the true order of their actual occurrence — a characteristic often lacking in those contemporary historical studies which skip with ease through entire decades, from the period of “war communism” to the eras of Stalin and Brezhnev and back again; however, only through the logically ordered presentation of historical events is it possible to explode both the Stalinist and the anti-communist amalgams and reveal the actual mechanisms of the most colossal political provocation in history, the success of which paved the way for the most colossal state system of terror in history.

Along this path we will be forced to confront the facts of the political and moral degeneration of those who had contributed to the victory of the October Revolution and who had appeared during the first years of the post-October period as Lenin’s closest associates. Together with the tragic guilt of these people — that is, together with their historical errors, we will also discover deliberate, improper conceptions and activities that reflected a break with the traditions, ideology, and the political and moral principles of Bolshevism. Yet even our opponents must agree, it seems, that the degeneration of certain individuals (which, of course, has not only personal, but social foundations) is a phenomenon which is fundamentally different from any inherent shortcoming or falsity within either communist ideology or the practice of revolutionary Bolshevism.

Our investigation is made easier by the fact that many historical documents, gathered from Soviet archives for the first time, have been made public in recent years. As it turned out, under the conditions of a bureaucratic regime and despite the many stamps of secrecy, the most important documents (including the personal correspondence of party leaders) were carefully preserved; these documents allow us to substantially enrich our conception of the real contradictions and drama of the winding path which the movement from Bolshevism to Stalinism followed.

With the objective of providing my account with greater harmony, I will not enter into a direct polemic in this book with the countless historical falsifications, be they old or the very latest in origin, although while working on the book one of my tasks has been to verify the

consistency of every historical interpretation on the basis of analyzing true facts and genuine historical documents.

1. Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. *Сочинения*, 2-е изд., Т. 20, С. 476 [MECW, Volume 25, *Dialectics of Nature*, p. 443].
2. Коэн С. Большевизм и сталинизм, *Вопросы философии*, 1989, № 7, С. 47 [Stephen Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," *Problems of Philosophy*, 1989, № 7, p. 47. Cf. Stephen Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," in *Stalinism. Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker, NY: W. W. Norton, 1977, p. 4].
3. Коэн С. Бухарин. *Политическая биография, 1888–1938*, М., 1988, С. 12 [Cf. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution. A Political Biography, 1888–1938*, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. xxvi–xxvii].
4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*. 1989, № 3, С. 132, 162. [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 3, pp. 132, 162].

ПРОЖЕКТОР

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!

№ 18.

1 ноября, 1923 г.

№ 18.



Рис. Бер. Ефимова.

Montage by Boris Efimov in the journal *Prozhektor*, celebrating the Sixth Anniversary of the October Revolution

1. The Birth of the One-Party System

In Marxist theory, the notion of a one-party system never was considered an essential characteristic of the political structure that follows the victory of a socialist revolution. Soon after the October revolution, however, the Bolshevik Party became the sole legal and governing political party in Russia.

In a certain sense, this situation was imposed on Bolshevism by hostile political forces. All other political parties, including those calling themselves “socialist,” not only rejected the socialist option offered by the Bolsheviks, but also engaged in armed struggle against the revolutionary regime. Nonetheless, the Bolsheviks made no small effort to preserve the “Soviet” parties (that is, those parties which had joined the Soviets before October 1917) within the bounds of Soviet legality.¹ During the civil war, the SRs [Socialist-Revolutionaries], Mensheviks, and other left parties were permitted to enter the Soviets whenever they abandoned their armed struggle against Soviet power. Lenin welcomed the shifts “away from those Menshevik and SR tendencies which gravitated to Kolchak and Denikin, and toward those Menshevik and SR tendencies which gravitated to Soviet power”; he emphasized that the Bolsheviks “were meeting them half-way on their part”² as soon as these shifts appeared in some real way. Even in December 1920, the leaders of those parties attended and spoke by invitation at the Eighth Congress of Soviets.

In the elections to the Constituent Assembly on 12 November 1917, the SRs received 58 percent of the vote compared to the Bolsheviks' 25 percent. The Mensheviks and other national social-democratic groups close to them collected less than 5 percent, while the Kadets and other bourgeois landowning parties gathered 13 percent. Thus, the overwhelming majority of voters voted altogether for two of the dozens of political parties that existed at the time. These elections did not, however, reflect the true alignment of political forces by that time, insofar as they were organized according to outdated lists compiled before the division of the SR party into Left and Right factions. This division had actually occurred in the period prior to the October insurrection, in which the Left SRs took an active part. Three days after the Constituent Assembly elections, the division became permanent. As Carr writes:

The larger section of the party (the SR party – V. R.) had made a coalition with the Bolsheviks, and formally broke from the other section which maintained its bitter feud against the Bolsheviks. The proportion between Right and Left SRs in the Constituent Assembly — 370 to 40 — was fortuitous. It was entirely different from the corresponding proportion in the membership of the peasants' congress (that is, the Extraordinary All-Russian Congress of Peasant Deputies' Soviets that took place from 11–25/OS November 1917 – V. R.).³

In this way, as Lenin wrote, “the people actually voted for a party which no longer existed.”⁴ This circumstance became the basis for a decision of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee [VTsIK], composed of Bolsheviks and Left SRs, to dissolve the Constituent Assembly should it refuse to support the first decrees of Soviet power. Several days later (on 10 December) the Soviet government was re-organized from a one-party structure into a coalition consisting of eleven Bolsheviks and seven Left SRs. Shortly before the signing of the Brest peace treaty, Lenin discussed with Proshyan — one of the Left SR leaders — the possibility of a merger between the Bolshevik and Left SR parties.

Following the conclusion of the Brest peace treaty, the Left SRs broke from the government coalition and left the Sovnarkom [the Council of Peoples' Commissars]. They continued to work, however, in the Central

Executive Committee and in the local Soviets. Among the delegates to the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets (in July 1918), the Left SRs comprised nearly a third. Only after their armed insurrection, which was aimed at breaking up the Brest peace and driving the Bolsheviks from power by violent means, was the legal activity of the Left SR party prohibited.

By the beginning of 1921 — that is, by the introduction of the New Economic Policy [NEP] — all the formerly “Soviet” parties underwent a series of splits. One portion of these parties’ members ceased political activity and entered into loyal collaboration with Soviet power in state institutions; a second portion joined the Bolshevik Party;⁵ and a third portion emigrated or worked underground, hatching interventionist schemes against Soviet power.

The introduction of the NEP was interpreted by bourgeois-liberals and former “Soviet” parties as a return to the “natural,” “normal” development of the Russian Revolution, which, from their point of view, should have been bourgeois-democratic. Following the liberalization of economic relations, these groups expected similar changes in the political superstructure, that is, the establishment of a bourgeois-democratic regime. The various layers of emigration, though torn by internal conflicts, were prepared at any favorable moment for the renewal of armed struggle against Soviet power in order to overthrow the Bolsheviks and liquidate the social gains of the October Revolution. Inside the country there existed a so-called “internal emigration,” i.e., social forces deprived of the opportunity to join a legal political formation, but also prepared to support capitalist restoration.

With great difficulty, the Bolshevik Party had led the country out of a state of ruin and an economic blockade; they had not received the expected support from revolutions in other countries (since many revolutionary upheavals in the West in 1918–1919 had been brutally crushed). Under these conditions, the Bolshevik Party did not allow any open political declarations of intent from parties adopting explicitly counter-revolutionary positions. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did not retreat from their former program of democratization in political life

based upon the affirmation of direct rule by the people. Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders emphasized that coercion and violence comprised only a single — and not the main — element of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They considered the most important element of the proletarian dictatorship to be the movement of the political regime in the direction of a “semi-state,” i.e., the socialist self-governing of workers. Based on the experience of the first two Russian revolutions (the revolutions of 1905 and of February 1917), Lenin discovered the political form of “a semi-state” — democratic Soviets as the expression of the direct participation of the popular masses in the administrative work of society and the state.

Yet the extremely low cultural level of the broad masses of the population in Russia did not allow for their rapid assimilation into the administration of governmental affairs. It was necessary, therefore, to create a new specialized apparatus of power and administration. As the Bolsheviks clearly understood, however, such a step also threatened to revive bureaucratism and privileged officialdom. Employing the concept of “bureaucratic centralism,” Lenin had described in March of 1918 how centralization and the bureaucratization of power might lead to the degeneration of democratic centralism.

In Lenin’s works during party discussions in the first years of Soviet power, there is frequent reference to the danger of bureaucratic degeneration within a party that does not share power with other political forces and cannot be succeeded by another party. This danger lay in the rise of party officialdom which resisted the withering away of the state, a process avowed to remove the bureaucracy from the historical stage.

In order to resist the tendency, characteristic of any bureaucratic organism, toward self-generation and self-expansion, an intense search began within the Bolshevik camp for social and political guarantees that would protect the party from both the usurpation of power by the party apparatus, and the growth of a narrow party oligarchy above it. The Bolsheviks sought guarantees against the degeneration of the party into a “new aristocracy,” a “caste that has laid its hands on power for the sake of

personal interests” (Dzerzhinsky). The first group of guarantees was directed against the use of power by members of the ruling party for self-seeking goals; the second included the wide development of inner-party democracy, assuming the equal rights of all members of the party to determine its political line.

1. For more detailed examples of the Bolsheviks’ search for an uneasy compromise by showing “tolerance” toward the “loyal” Mensheviks and SRs, see E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia, Volume I: The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, pp. 146–152 in the Moscow edition of 1990.

2. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 39, С. 59 [Lenin, CW, Volume 29, “All Out for the Fight against Denikin!,” p. 451].

3. Карр Э. *История Советской России*. Кн. 1: Большевиcтская революция. 1917–1923. М., 1990, Т. 1, С. 105 [E. H. Carr, *The History of Soviet Russia*, 1990 Russian edition, Volume 1, p. 105; 1950 English edition, Volume 1, pp. 111–112].

4. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 35, С. 111 [Lenin, CW, Volume 26, “Report on the Right of Recall,” (21 November 1917), p. 339].

5. At the Twelfth Party Congress, 14.7 percent of the delegates had come from other parties, and at the Thirteenth Congress, 11.6 percent.



Sixth Congress of the RSDRP(Bolsheviks) in August 1917

Top Row, Honorary Presidium of the Congress: Lenin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev, Kollontai, Lunacharsky

Bottom Row, Presidium of the Congress: Olminsky, Stalin, Sverdlov, Yurenev, Oppokov(Lomov)



Petrograd Soviet in 1918; Sitting: Uritsky, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Zinoviev, Lashevich



Trotsky, Lenin, Sverdlov in 1918

2. The Fight Against Privileges

After the October Revolution, a party came to power that had taken shape not in conditions of legal political struggle, but in conditions of the underground and emigration. The party was but a narrow layer compared to the popular masses who had been drawn into socialist transformations. Even the first stages of its activities as a ruling party posed the problem of dividing the party into “upper” and “lower” echelons, into those who govern (the professional party and Soviet functionaries) and those who are governed. This problem threatened to grow (which later did, indeed, happen) into the problem of dividing party members, as well as all society, into the privileged and the deprived, the rich and the poor.

Both before and after the Revolution, as well as before and after the introduction of NEP, Lenin defended the principle of establishing a wage for all government employees equal to the wage of the average worker. Recalling that Marx and Engels had considered this method, introduced for the first time by the Paris Commune, to be a reliable obstacle to careerism, and an infallible measure against the transformation of the state and its administrative organs from servants of society into its masters, Lenin emphasized:

It is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been almost completely forgotten! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. One is allowed to remain silent about this, as if it were a piece of old-fashioned naïveté, just as Christians, after their religion had been given the status of a state religion, “forgot” the naïveté of primitive

Christianity with its democratic revolutionary spirit. The reduction of pay for high state officials seems “simply” a demand of naive, primitive democratism.¹

In the first years after the October Revolution, the following principles dominated in the ideology and practice of the Bolshevik Party: belonging to the ruling party should not entail any benefits and advantages of a material, everyday, or legal character;² extreme difference in the income between skilled and unskilled workers serves as the material basis for the formation of new privileged groups; the establishment of pay rates and the provision of natural goods on a level many times exceeding the consumption of the great masses of the population is inadmissible; major differences in the conditions of existence of members of the ruling party hinder the strengthening of unity within it and impede party comradeship, to the interests of which all other interests of a communist must be subordinated.

Eugen Varga, a Hungarian political emigrant who lived in the USSR from 1919, recalled:

To join the Communist Party at that time meant to sacrifice oneself. Every communist exposed himself to risk, and had to be constantly on guard. Membership in the party brought no material advantages. In the years of war communism, communists received the same food rations as all other people. [During the famine, higher leaders of the party were given a small supplement to their ration], however, proletarian solidarity was so strong that Bukharin refused to receive additional provisions; a special decree of the Politburo forced him to accept them. He came to us in the Hotel “Luxe” in such a tattered shirt that my wife almost forcefully took it from him and patched it up.³

Meanwhile, even in the first years of Soviet power, the principle of material equality between the “upper” and the “lower” layers of the party was already being violated due to the influence of two basic factors. The first was the self-interested abuse of power for personal gain (bribe-taking, embezzlement, hoarding of provisions, extortion, etc.). The party viewed an attempt to use high posts for the sake of securing personal privileges to be the most terrible social evil and took organizational measures to liquidate such phenomena. Thus, in a circular letter of the Central Committee to all party organizations and all party members,

adopted in 1920, the Moscow Party Committee was instructed to conduct statistical research into the material status and living conditions of all communists in Moscow and the Moscow area in order “to establish more equal living conditions for them.” It was also instructed to investigate “the conditions of transportation usage by senior officials in order to combat wastefulness and lack of control in that sphere.”⁴

The Central Control Commission, formed at the Ninth Conference of the RKP(b), published “An Appeal to All Members of the Party,” in which the question of the so-called “upper” and “lower” layers was called one “of the most painful and acute questions of our revolution”; it emphasized the need to fight against “the transformation of certain people, and sometimes whole groups, into people abusing privileges ... sowing discord, dissension, and animosity within the proletarian party.”⁵

The Tenth Congress of the RKP(b) charged the CC and the control commissions “with the duty to fight decisively against abuses by party members regarding their status and material advantages.”⁶ The following, Eleventh Party Congress, taking into account the conditions of the NEP, indicated that “in the most ruthless manner, we must prosecute attempts at personal gain by ‘communists’ — leaders of state or economic organs.”⁷

A second factor of inequality between the “upper” and “lower” echelons of the party resulted from the “extraordinarily difficult situation of the Soviet republic during the first years of its existence, the extreme destruction and the enormous military danger, all of which made inevitable the designation of “shock” (and therefore essentially privileged) departments and groups of workers.”⁸ Among those groups receiving the largest rations, the best medical care, etc., were not only the workers in “high impact” sectors of the national economy; not only the specialists considered most “essential” for defense, science, technology, and culture; but also leading party officials, the health of whom, worn down by work of unparalleled severity, Lenin designated as “state property.” The necessity of resorting to supplementary food and improved housing and other conditions of daily existence for these workers was explained by the fact that many of them, working “without

any time limit, and with their physical health seriously damaged by the underground work, exile, and incarceration of the past, had given out for good and were beginning to fall from the ranks of active workers, both in the center and in the provinces.”⁹

In the report on the work of the Central Committee during the period between the Ninth and Tenth Party Congresses, it was noted that in the initial period after the October Revolution there had been no inequality in the living standards of party members. That is why, when exceptions were made in order to establish certain benefits for leading workers, this was “understandable to all members of the party; they acknowledged the benefits as completely legitimate and raised no objections. When, however, these privileges began to be distributed more widely ... then objections were raised, both toward the privileges themselves, and toward the correctness of their distribution. Behind many instances of opposition lay a protest, of which the opposition itself was often unconscious, against these privileges of the upper echelons.”¹⁰

The question of an admissible level of inequality was presented for discussion at the Ninth All-Russian Conference of the RKP(b) in September 1920. The draft resolution of the conference, prepared by Lenin, assigned the following task:

To work out precise practical guidelines for measures to eliminate this inequality (in living conditions, in the level of wages, etc.) between the “specialists” and senior officials on the one hand, and the masses on the other; this inequality is destroying democratic processes, is a source of demoralization within the party, and is undermining the authority of Communists ...¹¹

In developing these positions, the conference resolution indicated that Communist senior officials had no right to receive personal salaries, bonuses, or overtime pay.

The report of the Central Committee for the period between 15 September and 15 December 1920 noted that inequality in living conditions between party members was felt with particular sharpness in Moscow, where the greatest number of Communist senior officials was concentrated. In noting that the “issue of Kremlin privileges” was most

acute, the Central Committee considered that it was necessary to create an authoritative and impartial commission which would investigate:

the state of affairs within the Kremlin, establish the true extent of existing privileges, and, insofar as their complete abolition would be impossible, place them within a framework that would be comprehensible to every party comrade and that would also dispel rumors and conversations about Kremlin practices which do not correspond to reality.¹²

A resolution of the Eleventh Party Congress of 1922, "On Strengthening the Party and New Tasks," noted that it was urgently necessary to put a decisive end to the great difference in salary for the various groups of Communists. It instructed the Central Committee to quickly settle the question of excessively high wages by establishing a maximum limit beyond which any remaining sum of earnings would go to the needs of mutual party aid. It is noteworthy that in February 1922, while he was filling out a questionnaire of the All-Russian Census of Communist Party members, Lenin indicated a sum of 4700 rubles as his "most recent monthly salary," which exceeded the average monthly wage for a rank-and-file factory worker at the time by a mere 37 percent.

Of course, the scale of privileges and the inequality between the "upper" and "lower" echelons were immeasurably lower during the first years of Soviet power than in later years. They represented, however, that "cancerous cell," which threatened the degeneration of not only the Bolshevik Party, but also the very social content of the socialist revolution. One can therefore understand the urgency with which the party and its Central Committee returned, time after time, to problems of the struggle against material inequality and privileges.

1. Ленин, В. И., ПСС, Т. 33, С. 43 [Lenin, CW, Volume 25, *State and Revolution*, p. 420].

2. Connected with this was the principle of heightened liability of communists for breaking the law. In a letter to Kursky on the tasks of the People's Commissariat of Justice, Lenin wrote: "The ABC of legal work is ... to triple the punishment of communists compared to the punishment of those outside the party." (Ленин, В. И., ПСС, Т. 44, С. 397) [Lenin, *Complete Collected Works* (PSS), Volume 44, p. 397].

3. Полис, 1991, № 2, С. 182 [Polis, 1991, № 2, p. 182].

- [4.](#) *Известия ЦК РКП(б)*, 1920, № 21, С. 2–3 [*Information of the CC RKP(b)*, 1920, № 21, pp. 2–3].
- [5.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 222 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 222].
- [6.](#) Десятый съезд Российской Коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1963, С. 564 [*Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*, Stenographic Record, M., 1963, p. 564].
- [7.](#) *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях съездов, конференций и пленумов ЦК*, изд. 9, Т. 2, С. 507 [*CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and CC Plenums*, 9th Edition, Volume 2, p. 507].
- [8.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 41, Проект резолюции об очередных задачах партийного строительства, С. 292 [Lenin, CW, Volume 42, “Draft Resolution on the Immediate Tasks of Party Development,” 24 September 1920, p. 212].
- [9.](#) Десятый съезд Российской Коммунистической партии (большевиков), С. 801, 802. [*Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*, pp. 801, 802].
- [10.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [11.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 41, С. 293 [Lenin, CW, Volume 42, “Draft Resolution on the Immediate Tasks of Party Development,” 24 September 1920, p. 213].
- [12.](#) *Известия ЦК РКП (б)*, 1920, № 26, С. 2 [*Information of the CC RCP(b)*, 1920, № 26, p. 2].

3. Guaranteeing the Rights of a Dissenting Minority

Another “cell,” which threatened to develop into a cancerous tumor, consuming the gains of the October Revolution, was the restriction of inner-party democracy, provoked by the extreme conditions of the first years of Soviet power.

Marxists have always considered the struggle of inner-party ideological tendencies, and the clash of disparate views on concrete political questions, to be a normal feature in the development of a workers’ party. Unlike the subsequent interpretation of this feature by Stalin, who declared that such a struggle should unfailingly conclude with the removal of the dissenting minority, genuine Marxists attempted to resolve, in a fundamentally different way, the contradiction between the need for party unity and the need for the democratic character of its ideological life.

Engels repeatedly emphasized the inadmissibility of restricting discussions and applying organizational sanctions against an opposition minority in the party. “Evidently, *any* workers’ party in a large country,” he wrote, “can develop only through internal struggle, generally in full correspondence with the laws of dialectical development.”¹ In a letter to Friedrich Sorge, Engels formulated this lawful behavior more concretely:

The party is so large that the absolute freedom of exchange of opinions within it is a necessity ... I will try to convince them (August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, leaders of German Social-Democracy at that time. – V. R.) of the

foolishness of any expulsions which are based not on convincing proof of actions harmful to the party, but merely on the charge of organizing an opposition. ... The party cannot exist without the abundant manifestation of nuances of all kinds, and it must avoid even the appearance of a dictatorship ...²

From the moment of their formation as a faction within the Russian Social-Democratic Party, and then as an independent party, the Bolsheviks, following these organizational principles, proceeded from recognition of the rights “of any minority, so that the disagreements, dissatisfaction, and irritation that will constantly and unavoidably arise may be diverted from the old philistine, circle channels of scandal and petty squabbles and into the still unaccustomed channels of a fully-formalized and dignified struggle for one’s convictions.”³

Lenin repeatedly emphasized that party discipline — the most important condition for the organizational unity of the party — should be the same for all of its members and should be built on the combination of unity of action with freedom of discussion and criticism.

But beyond the bounds of unity of action [there must be] the broadest and freest discussion ... Before the call for action is issued, [there should be] the broadest and freest discussion and appraisal of a resolution, of its arguments, and its various propositions.⁴

A substantial shift in resolving the problem of party unity occurred in the practice of Bolshevism after the February Revolution. During the pre-revolutionary period, Lenin and his comrades split relatively easily with his opponents — Mensheviks, liquidators, conciliators, recallists, Machists, and others — over strategic, tactical, organizational, and even philosophical questions. When, however, the party was drawing very close to the conquest of power, the problem that came to the forefront was that of uniting all the political forces that were similar in their approach to the essential questions of the Russian Revolution. Therefore, at the Sixth Congress of the RSDLP(b) in August 1917, the party accepted into its ranks around four thousand so-called “mezhraiontsy,” the representatives of various currents of Social-Democracy who had carried on polemics against the Bolsheviks in the past, but after the

February Revolution had drawn close to them on positions of internationalism and the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one.

Beginning in 1917, Lenin devoted a great deal of attention to smoothly overcoming differences in the ranks of the Bolsheviks. In the space of several weeks, without any expulsions and splits, differences were settled first over the new strategy of the party, as formulated in the April Theses, and then over the acceptance of a course toward an armed uprising and the formation of a one-party government.

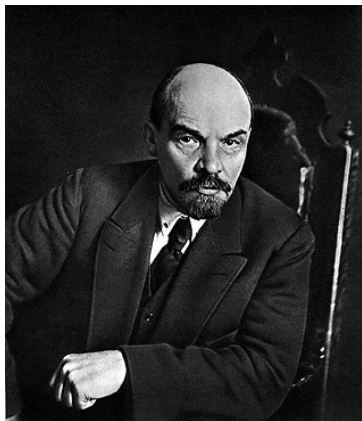
Aware that a party that has assumed power especially needs unity within its ranks, Lenin directed constant efforts firstly, toward preventing inner-party splits and dissolving factions to the extent that disputed problems could be solved; and secondly, toward softening and neutralizing personal conflicts between party members, particularly in the ranks of its leadership.

An enormous contribution to securing the organizational and moral unity of the party was made by Sverdlov, who combined two of the most important governmental and party posts — chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee [VTsIK] and sole secretary of the Central Committee, the entire apparatus of which consisted of a few technical assistants. Sverdlov embodied the moral principles and traditions of Bolshevism that predominated both in the party and in its Central Committee during the first years of the revolution.

In a speech devoted to Sverdlov's memory, Lenin stressed that "in the course of our revolution, and in its victories, Comrade Sverdlov succeeded in expressing more fully and integrally than anybody else the chief and most important features of the proletarian revolution."⁵ Lenin paid special attention to the following:

It was only the exceptional organizing talent of this man which gave us that which we have been so proud of, so justly proud of, up to now. He made it possible for us to carry on concerted, efficient, ... and cohesive organizational work, without which ... we could not have overcome any one of the innumerable difficulties, not a single one of the severe trials, through which

we have passed until now and through which we will be forced to pass in the future.⁶



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
(1870–1924)



Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov
(1885–1919)

Noting that there was no other person within the party who possessed such unquestionable moral authority, Lenin said:

We shall never be able to replace [Sverdlov] ... if by replacement we mean finding one man, one comrade, with all these qualities ... The work he performed by himself as an organizer, in choosing personnel and appointing them to responsible posts in all the various departments, will be performed in the future only if we appoint whole groups of people to each of the large branches that he managed alone, and if these people, following in his footsteps, come near to doing what this one man did alone.⁷

Proceeding from this strictly practical suggestion by Lenin, the Eighth Party Congress, gathering a few days after Sverdlov's death, decided to create two permanent collegial agencies for deciding the most important questions without waiting for the convening of the next CC plenum: the Politburo and the Orgburo of the Central Committee. While preserving for the Orgburo the general functions of guiding the organizational work, the Ninth Congress of the RKP(b) in 1920 created a Secretariat of the CC consisting of three people. Current problems of an organizational and

executive character were handled by this body. All the secretaries of the Central Committee were members of the Orgburo.

There was no official “leadership” position in the party during Lenin’s time. At sessions of the Central Committee and Politburo, Lenin chaired, and in his absence, Kamenev, who formally held no party posts. Before 1921, the members of the Politburo were Lenin, Kamenev, Krestinsky, Stalin, and Trotsky. After the Tenth Congress, Zinoviev was elected member of the Politburo in place of Krestinsky. After the Eleventh Party Congress, Rykov and Tomsy were added as Politburo members.

The work of the Secretariat, which was strictly subordinated to the other higher party bodies, was determined primarily by the relatively small size of the Central Committee; it met fairly often for its plenary sessions (thirty such sessions took place over a mere eleven-month period between the Ninth and Tenth Congresses of the party), during which it resolved all the fundamental political, organizational, and day-to-day issues. The work of the Central Committee was open, insofar as the stenographic reports of the Committee and its departments were published regularly in the journal, *Information of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (b)*, which was available to the entire party. The Central Committee reported on its work before each congress and conference of the RKP(b); these were convened once a year (in 1921 there were even two All-Russian Party Conferences).

Summing up the results of the first year’s work in the two new collegia, the Politburo and the Orgburo, Lenin noted at the Ninth Congress:

The work of these bodies has on the whole proceeded harmoniously, and practical implementation has been facilitated by the presence of the Secretary, who acted, moreover, solely and exclusively in pursuance of the will of the Central Committee ... Only the collective decisions of the Central Committee reached in the Orgburo or in the Politburo, or at a plenum of the Central Committee — only these decisions were carried out by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the party. Otherwise, the work of the Central Committee cannot proceed correctly.⁸

Such were the organizational guarantees of party unity. Even more important were the ideological and political guarantees of this unity: the

freedom to form factions and blocs of various party groups; the guarantee of rights to any loyal opposition; and the inadmissibility of persecuting any dissenters. Lenin's idea that "in our revolution we have actually combined contradictions again and again,"⁹ to a large extent could be applied to the ideological struggle within the party, which sought to work out a correct political line by selecting all that was rational from the various political platforms. In the party, political discussion systematically arose; in the course of these, various ideological tendencies appeared. These tendencies dissolved to the extent that some problems were solved, and other, newer problems emerged, leading to a regrouping of the contending sides. None of this interfered with preserving the unity and cohesion of the party, or the stability of its leading core. Despite the critical, extreme sharpness that sometimes characterized the factional struggle, right up until 1923 not a single group left (or was removed from) the ranks of the party, and not one of its leaders was removed from the leading party work.

Even under conditions of civil war, democratic norms continued to operate in the party, guarding against tendencies toward authoritarianism, against the degeneration of the party leadership into oligarchic rule, and a regime of personal power. With all the enormous authority of Lenin in the party, he was never seen to possess a monopoly on expressing correct views. Only the influence of stereotypes coming from *The Short Course of the History of the VKP(b)* can explain the transfer of later historical realia — connected with the establishment of a regime of personal power and the domination of personal policies — back onto Lenin's period of party life. Similar historical aberrations find reflection in formulas like: "Lenin introduced NEP," "Lenin accomplished a turn in policy," and so forth. They are also found in conceptions that any disagreement with a position held by Lenin on one or another principled question was seen as an expression of the political and ideological position of his opponents. There are no few instances when Lenin ended up in the minority during voting in the Central Committee, Politburo, or other party forums. For instance, during the discussion on one-person management and collegiality in 1920, at a meeting of senior

officials in Moscow Lenin received only a few votes, and the person speaking against him, Tomsy, received an overwhelming majority.

The party line was invariably worked out by means of free, frequently sharp exchanges of opinions, in which no organizational measures were taken with the representatives of oppositions or “deviations.” Thus, in the fall of 1920 in the Moscow party organization, the struggle between supporters of the Central Committee and the faction of Democratic Centralism became so heated, that the city conference was divided into two groups, which met in separate locations, and Lenin served as intermediary. However, in this, as well as all other cases, disagreements did not end in a split or the removal of some grouping.

Even in the extreme conditions of civil war, elections to party congresses and voting at them often proceeded according to platforms. At the Seventh through Tenth Congresses, co-reports were heard and resolutions were discussed coming from groups of delegates not in agreement with the position of the Central Committee or its majority. Thus, at the Eleventh Congress, the “Democratic Centralists” presented theses, and at the congress itself, two of its co-reporters spoke in favor of increasing collegiality in managing the economy. In his concluding words at the congress, Lenin pointed to the theoretically mistaken, in his opinion, presentation of the question by the “Democratic Centralists.” At the same time, he noted that their theses contained “a mass of practical material, to which attention must be given.”¹⁰ The leader of this grouping, Timofei Sapronov, sharply polemicized with Lenin at the Ninth and Tenth Congresses; at the Eleventh Congress he was elected to the Central Committee.

Lenin indicated that when the struggle of groups, tendencies, or factions arose, it was essential to include proportional representation of them at party congresses. Believing, as before, that the single restriction on factions and blocs should be preventing them from going beyond the bounds of the party program, Lenin wrote:

It is, of course, quite permissible (especially before a congress), for various groups to form blocs (and to chase after votes, as well). But this must be done within the bounds of Communism ...¹¹

From congress to congress there developed an understanding of inner-party democracy as a political regime based on freedom of discussions, a struggle of opinions and currents in the party, on guarantees of the rights of a minority grouped around the defense of definite political positions. At the Eighth Conference a point was added to the new party statutes that was not in the previous statutes: “Within the party, discussion of all questions of party life is free until a resolution is adopted.”¹² A resolution passed at the Ninth Party Conference, “On the Immediate Tasks of Party-Building,” contained a special warning against the use of organizational sanctions (e.g., removal from party or soviet positions, etc.) against those Communists whose views had been rejected during the course of an inner-party struggle: “Any repressive measures whatsoever against comrades because of their differences on one or another set of issues resolved by the party are inadmissible.”¹³ The same resolution outlined a series of concrete measures to allow for the possibility of broader criticism within the party, including the criticism of its local and central agencies. It also acknowledged the need to create special written forms — discussion leaflets, including a discussion page within *Information of the CC, RKP(b)*.

The defense of those holding dissident ideas and their protection from repressive measures, both before and after the adoption of party resolutions, was regarded as one of the main tasks of the Central Control Commission and the control commissions in the provinces. In the draft of a Politburo decree written by Lenin, he assigned the task of making the Control Commission “a true agency of party and proletarian conscience.” He suggested that its special task would be:

To adopt a careful and individualized attitude, often even in the form of a downright cure, toward representatives of the so-called opposition who have suffered a psychological crisis due to failures in their Soviet or party career. We should try to calm them, to explain the situation to them in a comradely manner, to find them work (but not by means of an order) which corresponds to their psychological abilities, to give advice in the matter, instructions of the Orgburo of the CC, etc.¹⁴

This decree was adopted by the Politburo on 26 October 1920 and published two days later in *Pravda* under the headline, “On Inner-Party Moods.”

Thus, even under conditions of civil war, the ruling party (like the democratic Soviets) preserved its initial independence and enjoyed political rights that were immeasurably greater than just a few years later, when the process of the Thermidorian degeneration of the party and Soviet regime unfolded. In spite of the restrictions on inner-party democracy imposed by the circumstances of civil war, within the party there reigned the principle, formulated at the height of the trade union discussion by Trotsky and supported at that time by Lenin: “An ideological struggle in the Party does not mean mutual ostracism, but mutual influence.”¹⁵

1. Маркс К., Энгельс Ф., *Сочинения*, Т. 35, С. 312 [MECW, Volume 46, Engels to Bernstein, 20 October 1882, p. 342].

2. Маркс К., Энгельс Ф., *Соч.* Т. 37, С. 373, 374 [MECW, Volume 49, Engels to Sorge, 9 August 1890, p. 11].

3. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 9, С. 19 [Lenin, CW, Volume 7, “To the Party,” p. 460].

4. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 13, С. 64, 65 [Lenin, CW, Volume 10, “Report on the Unity Congress of the RSDLP” p. 381].

5. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 38, С. 74 [Lenin, CW, Volume 29, “Speech in Memory of Y. M. Sverdlov at a Special Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee,” 18 March 1919, p. 89].

6. Там же, С. 77 [Ibid., p. 92].

7. Там же, С. 78, 79 [Ibid., pp. 93, 94].

8. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 40, С. 238 [Lenin, CW, Volume 30, “Report of the Central Committee,” 29 March 1920, p. 444].

9. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 42, С. 211 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky’s Mistakes,” 30 December 1920, p. 27].

10. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 40, С. 259 [Lenin, CW, Volume 30, “Reply to the Discussion on the Report of the Central Committee,” 30 March 1920, p. 464].

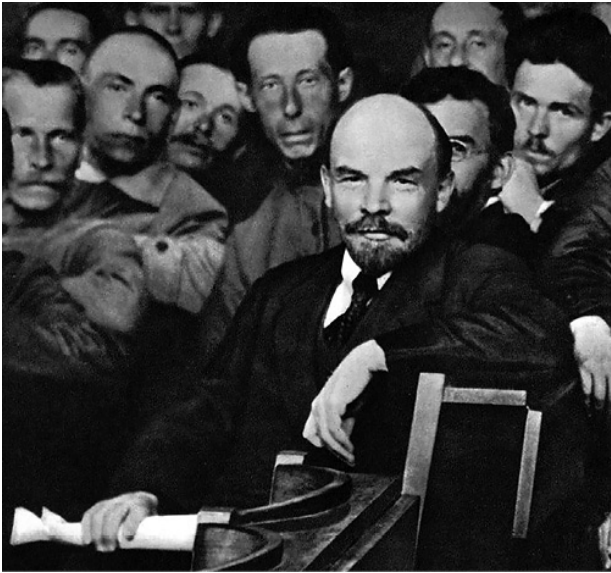
11. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 42, С. 243 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “The Party Crisis,” 19 January 1921, p. 52].

12. VIII конференция РКП(б). Протоколы. М., 1961, С. 197–198 [Protocols of the Eighth Conference of the RKP(b), М., 1961, pp. 197–198].

- [13.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях. Т. 2, С. 300 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 2, p. 300].
- [14.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 41, С. 394 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 42, “Draft Decision for the Politburo of the CC, РКР(b),” 26 October 1920, p. 221].
- [15.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 42, С. 303 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 32, “Once Again on the Trade Unions,” 25 January 1921, p. 106].



Lenin and Trotsky among delegates to the Tenth Party Congress in 1921



Lenin at the Tenth Party Congress

4. A “State of Siege” or Workers’ Democracy?

Many western historians, and many Soviet publicists following them, date the destruction of the democratic inner-party regime and the establishment of a “state of siege” in the party from the Tenth Party Congress (March 1921). The Tenth Congress was preceded by a discussion on the trade unions, in the course of which several factions appeared: the faction of the CC majority headed by Lenin, Zinoviev, and Stalin; the faction of Trotsky and Bukharin, who had united on a platform supported by CC members Andreev, Dzerzhinsky, Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky, Rakovsky, and Serebriakov; the faction of “Democratic Centralism,” led by Osinsky and Sapronov; and the faction of the “Workers’ Opposition,” headed by Shlyapnikov and Kollontai. Such a factional splintering of the party, as well as the prolonged and extremely sharp character of the discussion, is explained by the fact that the very subject of the debate was not correctly recognized by the contending sides.

In 1923, as he retrospectively evaluated this discussion, Trotsky wrote:

Now that we have the possibility of embracing this entire period at a glance and of illuminating it in the light of subsequent experience, it becomes absolutely clear that the discussion by no means revolved around the trade unions, nor even worker’s democracy: what was expressed in these disputes was a profound uneasiness in the party, caused by the excessive prolonging of the economic regime of “war communism.” The entire economic organism of the country was in a vise. The discussion on the role of the trade unions and

of workers' democracy covered up the search for a new economic road. The actual way out was found in the elimination of the requisitioning of food products and of the grain monopoly, and in the gradual liberation of state industry from the tyranny of the central economic managements. These historical decisions were taken unanimously and completely overshadowed the trade union discussion, all the more so because of the fact that following the establishment of the NEP, the very role of the trade unions themselves appeared in a completely different light and, several months later, the resolution on the trade unions had to be modified radically.¹

Characterizing somewhat later the discussion on the trade unions as having grown "from the economic impasse based on the requisitioning of food and on the *glavkokratia* [rule of the central administration boards]," Trotsky wrote that overcoming this impasse could not be helped by the "merging" of the trade unions and state organs that he had proposed.

But neither could any other measure remedy the situation so long as the economic regime of "war communism" continued to exist. These episodic discussions were wiped out before the decision to resort to the market, a decision of capital importance which did not engender any difference of opinion. The new resolution devoted to the tasks of the trade unions on the basis of the NEP were worked out by Lenin between the Tenth and Eleventh Congresses and were, again, adopted unanimously.²

The sharp factional struggle, in particular, after splitting the Central Committee into two groups (in which Lenin's group outweighed the grouping around Trotsky-Bukharin by only one vote), found expression in the decision by the Congress to change the composition of the CC's membership and its elected bodies. Prior to the Tenth Congress, the Secretariat of the CC consisted exclusively of people who had supported Trotsky's position in the discussions. None of the three (Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky, and Serebriakov), was re-elected to the CC. On the other hand, for the first time, people from Stalin's closest entourage became members of the CC: Voroshilov, Molotov, and Ordzhonikidze. These individual changes were inspired by Zinoviev and Stalin, who had convinced Lenin at that time that the "Trotskyists" might preserve their faction and weaken his (Lenin's) position in the Central Committee.



Nikolai Krestinsky
(1883–1938)



Yevgeny Preobrazhensky
(1886–1937)



Leonid Serebriakov
(1888–1937)

Beyond all of this, however, it is clear that the Congress made decisions directed not toward the establishment of a “state of siege” in the party, but, on the contrary, toward the liquidation of the restrictions on inner-party democracy that had been caused by the civil war.

In the Congress resolution on problems of party-building, a radical change in the organizational form of the party’s activity was recognized as the most important task. Under the conditions of civil war, when the entire country had been transformed into an armed camp, the organizational form had been the “militarization of party organization,” which had found expression “in extreme organizational centralism and in the reduction of its collective agencies ...”³ Having announced the liquidation of command methods of party work, which had gravitated toward “a system of military orders given by leading party institutions and which were unquestionably obeyed without discussion by rank-and-file members of the party,” the Congress outlined a course toward workers’ democracy. This was understood as an organizational form that

guarantees all members of the party, even its most backward, active participation in the life of the party, in the discussion of all problems raised before it, and in the resolution of these problems, along with active participation in building the party. The form of workers’ democracy excludes any system of appointments, and finds expression in wide-ranging elections to all offices, from bottom to top, and in their accountability, controllability, etc.⁴

The resolution stressed the need for constant control by rank-and-file Communists over the work of leading organs of all party committees, not only by the highest, but by the lowest organizations.

The same resolution provided for measures directed against the rise of a permanent party officialdom, or that layer which subsequently came to be known as the “nomenklatura.” With this goal in mind, the resolution proposed that officials who had long performed Soviet and party work be systematically transferred to the workbench and the plow, as already foreseen at the Eighth Party Congress. They were to be placed, moreover, in the typical living conditions of other workers.⁵

Yet the new political course proclaimed at the Tenth Party Congress was not implemented with the same consistency as the change in economic policy at that time, the New Economic Policy [NEP]. A significant obstacle to the realization of the new political course was the resolution passed by the Tenth Congress “On Party Unity,” which called for a ban on factions — that is, a transferral of the political regime within the state to the inner life of the ruling party. Lenin justified the necessity of passing this resolution by pointing to the extraordinary state of the country, the most extreme expression of which was the Kronstadt rebellion that occurred during the Congress.

In his concluding remarks at the Congress, Lenin openly noted that the resolution’s seventh paragraph, which foresaw the expulsion by a plenum of the CC of its members who tolerated factionalism, contradicted Party Statutes and the principle of democratic centralism. He proposed to withhold this paragraph from publication, proceeding from the possibility that the implementation of such an extreme measure, dictated by the danger of the political situation, might not be required.

The Congress elects the CC, thereby expressing its supreme confidence in and vesting leadership to those whom it elects. And that the CC has such a right (expulsion from the CC – V. R.) with regard to one of its members — our party has never allowed any such thing. This is an extreme measure ... I hope that we shall not apply it.⁶

Having banned factions, the congress, however, not only did not ban inner-party discussions, but, on the contrary, stressed the necessity of

“wide discussions on all the most important questions, discussions about them with full freedom of inner-party criticism.”⁷ Lenin strongly spoke out against an amendment proposed by Riazanov that would forbid elections to the Congress according to platforms. He spoke about the need to refer “to the judgment of the entire party” disagreements on fundamental problems if they arose in the CC or among the broad party masses. With the aim of criticizing shortcomings of the party, or having all members of the party analyze its general line, he proposed regularly publishing “Discussion Pages” and theoretical anthologies. A congress resolution indicated:

Anyone making a criticism must ... with his immediate participation in soviet and party work, strive to correct in practice mistakes of the party ... While rejecting decisively impractical and factional criticism, the party tirelessly will continue, while trying out new methods, to struggle with all means against bureaucracy, and for a widening of democratism and self-initiative.⁸

One more decision of the Tenth Congress was the resolution “On the Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in Our Party.” This resolution declared the propaganda of the views of the Workers’ Opposition to be incompatible with membership in the party, since their views contradicted the party program. This did not mean that disputes surrounding the interpretation of the program should come to an end. Lenin stressed that the highest body of the party, a congress, had the right to both authoritatively interpret the program and to amend it. The acknowledgment by this or any other congress that certain ideas are incompatible with the program of the party did not place a ban on any future theoretical investigations surrounding these ideas, which might conclude with proposals to introduce amendments to the program.

Members of the Workers’ Opposition were not only not presented with a demand to renounce their views, but, on the contrary, they were presented with the chance to continue their “scientific research” and theoretical criticism of the views of the majority in special publications. The congress emphasized the advisability of “a more substantial exchange of opinions by party members on questions raised by the Workers’ Opposition.”⁹

Moreover, in the draft resolution “On Party Unity” and in his speeches, Lenin said that when it came to questions raised by the Workers’ Opposition, “such as purging the party of non-proletarian and unreliable elements, combating bureaucratic practices, developing democracy and workers’ initiative, etc., whatever their practical proposals, they must be examined with the greatest care and tested in practice.”¹⁰ Lenin especially stressed that the resolution contained an acknowledgment of the service of the Workers’ Opposition in the struggle against bureaucratism. Noting that “we would arrive at a political collapse” if we did not heed, to the greatest extent, the moods expressed by the Workers’ Opposition, Lenin said, “Insofar as the Workers’ Opposition has defended democracy, insofar as it has made healthy demands, we will do the maximum to draw close to it.” Proceeding from this statement, he proposed to draw closer those members of the Workers’ Opposition who referred to “the bureaucratic disgraces of our apparatus ... to enlist them for this work (the fight against bureaucratism – V. R.) and to place them in higher positions.”¹¹ Shlyapnikov¹² and Kutuzov, participants in the Workers’ Opposition, were elected to membership of the CC by the Congress, and Kiselyov was elected a candidate-member. Lenin called the inclusion of representatives of this group in the CC “the highest sign of trust, there can be nothing higher than that in the party.”¹³

By analyzing the entire sum of Lenin’s statements on these issues, which were made amidst the heated conditions of the Congress and the thunderous peals of the Kronstadt battles, one can see certain contradictions, or, more specifically, the lack of a clear division between the concepts of “propaganda of views,” declared to be inadmissible; the “theoretical debates” surrounding these views, declared to be not only admissible, but also necessary; and the “practical proposals” flowing from these views, which were presented as a service done by the Workers’ Opposition. An unbiased analysis of Lenin’s statements, however, demonstrates how persistently Lenin sought this dividing line: the line

between factionalism and the rights of a party minority to dissenting views, theoretical investigations and practical proposals.

Sharing Lenin's approach to the Workers' Opposition, Trotsky noted several years later that, first of all, in the decisions of the Tenth Congress, formal half-way steps were made toward what was correct and healthy in the criticism and demands of the Workers' Opposition. Second, these formal steps were supplemented by authentic and extremely important steps toward purging the party of non-Communist elements, a demand the Workers' Opposition had made.

A general purge of the party designated by the Tenth Congress was conducted in 1921. A letter from the CC to all party organizations, "On the Party Purge," which outlined the tasks and principles of its implementation, emphasized that the spearhead of the attack was to be directed against "those high officials who have become commissars," including former workers who "have managed to lose all the good qualities of proletarians and acquire all the bad qualities of bureaucrats."¹⁴ At the same time, the letter noted that in the course of the purge "repressive measures against dissenters within the party (for example, against members of the former Workers' Opposition, and others) will not be tolerated under any circumstances."¹⁵

The very idea of party purges was promoted by Lenin with the goal of preventing internal dangers that lurked within the one-party system and could lead to the degeneration of the social content of the revolution. In this connection, Lenin repeatedly advanced the demand of preserving the relatively small size of the party, restraining the spontaneous growth of its ranks. He emphasized that the Bolshevik Party was "the only governing party in the world which is concerned not with increasing its membership, but with improving its quality, and purging the party of 'self-seekers'..."¹⁶

In Lenin's lifetime, a massive campaign to admit members into the party was carried out only once — in 1919, when the White Armies were carrying out an offensive against Moscow and Petrograd, "that is, when a desperate, mortal danger threatened the Soviet Republic, when

adventurists, careerists, charlatans, and generally unreliable people could by no means count on a profitable career (and had more reason to expect the gallows and torture) by joining the Communists.”¹⁷

In 1919, Lenin agreed with a demand by Dukelsky, a non-party professor, to purge the party and government institutions of “unscrupulous, casual fellow-travelers, of self-seekers, adventurers, hangers-on, and bandits.”¹⁸ Advancing demands of this type as a fundamental task for a general purge of the party in 1921, Lenin clearly outlined its conditions and principles. The purge of the party was to be public, open, and applied to all members of the party without exception, including senior officials, thereby facilitating a renewal of the Soviet and party apparatus by taking into account the opinions of non-party workers. Lenin considered the participation of non-party members essential, since:

In appraising persons, in the negative attitude to those who have “attached” themselves to us for selfish motives, to those who have become “commissars” and “bureaucrats,” the suggestions of the non-party proletarian masses, and, in many cases, of the non-party peasant masses, are extremely valuable. The working masses have a fine intuition, which enables them to distinguish between honest and devoted Communists, and those who arouse the disgust of people earning their bread by the sweat of their brow, enjoying no privileges and having no “pull.”¹⁹

Among those expelled from the party in the course of the purge of 1921, 33.8 percent were passive figures taking no part in party life; 24.7 percent were expelled for careerism, self-seeking, drunkenness, or for leading a bourgeois lifestyle; 8.7 percent were expelled for bribe-taking, requisitions for personal use, extortion, blackmail, or for abusing their official position and the power entrusted to them. In evaluating the results of the purge, Lenin pointed out that it had helped in getting rid of “self-seekers, who had latched onto the party, thieves.” At the concluding moment of this purge, however, a new and “our very worst internal enemy” was discovered: “the bureaucrat,” who is not guilty of any clear abuses, but who is unable to struggle against red tape, and instead conceals it. Therefore, the next purge, Lenin believed, would have to be

directed against “Communists who imagine themselves to be administrators.”²⁰

Lenin advanced still another demand intended to neutralize the negative tendencies emerging from the one-party political system. He proposed to introduce more severe conditions for admittance into the ranks of the party: first, by lengthening the period of candidacy and preserving the six-month period only “for those workers who have actually been employed in large industrial enterprises for no less than ten years.”²¹ In this connection he considered it essential:

to define the term “worker” in such a way as to include only those who have acquired a proletarian mentality from their very conditions of life. But this is impossible unless the persons concerned have worked in a factory for many years, not from ulterior motives, but because of the general conditions of their economic and social life.²²

These proposals, which Lenin intended to deliver at a plenum of the CC and the Party Congress, were contained in letters to CC Secretary Viacheslav Molotov, “On the Conditions for Admitting New Members into the Party” (March 1922), intended for distribution to all members of the CC. In them, Lenin raised issues going beyond the framework of the present topic and presented a rough outline of the ideas expressed later in the “Letter to the Congress” and in his other final articles.

1. Троцкий, Л. Д., *К истории русской революции*, М., 1990, С. 182–183 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The New Course* 1923, New Park, 1972, p. 22].

2. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Новый курс*, М., 1924, С. 54 [Ibid., p. 48].

3. КПСС в резолюциях и решениях. Т. 2. С. 324 [CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions, Volume 2, p. 324].

4. Там же, С. 324, 327 [Ibid., pp. 324, 327].

5. Such a “rotation” of party cadres undoubtedly will be seen as something quite fantastic to the contemporary reader. Such a practice existed in the party, however, throughout the entire 1920s. In 1921, the “Discussion Page” announced that in Petrograd and Orekho-Zuyevo a number of senior officials, who had formerly been workers, had been sent back to their earlier workplaces. “This good initiative,” wrote one of the authors of the “Page,” “should be deepened and carried out more widely.”

Later, active worker-Communists were often transferred to party staff work, then, after having served there for some time, returned again to their former places of work. Khrushchev recalled how he long remained under the sway of the psychology and traditions of the 1920s, and right up to 1935 retained his metallurgical tools, assuming that at any moment he might lose his elected party post and thus be forced to return to work at his main specialty as a metalworker. [See *Znaniia*, 1989, № 9, p. 21].

[6.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 43, С. 108 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “Concluding Speech on Party Unity,” 16 March 1921, p. 258].

[7.](#) Десятый съезд РКП(б), С. 563 [*Tenth Congress of the RKP(b)*, p. 563].

[8.](#) Там же, С. 573 [Ibid., p. 573].

[9.](#) Там же; [Ibid.].

[10.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 43, С. 91, 92 [Ibid., “Preliminary Draft Resolution of the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P. on Party Unity,” pp. 243–244. First published in *Prozhektor*, 1923, № 22].

[11.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 43, С. 54–55 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “Speech on the Trade Unions,” 14 March 1921, pp. 212–213].

[12.](#) Shlyapnikov received 354 out of 479 votes in the Central Committee election, but his platform at the Party Congress could win only 18 votes.

[13.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 43, С. 111 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “Summing-Up Speech on Party Unity and the Anarcho-Syndicalist Deviation,” 16 March 1921, p. 260].

[14.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 2, С. 440–442 [*CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 2, p. 440].

[15.](#) Ibid., p. 442.

[16.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 39, С. 224 [Lenin, CW, Volume 30, “The Workers’ State and Party Week,” 11 October 1919, p. 63].

[17.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 41, С. 30 [Lenin, CW, Volume 31, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism—An Infantile Disorder,” April-May 1920, p. 47].

[18.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 38, С. 222 [Lenin, CW, Volume 29, “Reply to a Bourgeois Specialist,” 27 March 1919, p. 232].

[19.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 44, С. 123 [Lenin, CW, Volume 33, “Purging the Party,” 20 September 1921, pp. 39–40].

[20.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 45, С. 15 [Lenin, CW, Volume 33, “The International and Domestic Situation,” 8 March 1922, p. 225].

[21.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 45, С. 17–18 [Lenin, CW, Volume 33, “On the Conditions for Admitting New Members into the Party,” 24 March 1922), p. 254].

[22.](#) Ibid., p. 20 [Ibid., p. 257].

5. The Old Guard of the Party: Danger of a Split

In weighing and analyzing the alternatives for the party's possible development, Lenin turned his attention to the party in its current state and concluded that it still was not the kind of political organism that would allow it on the whole (and not even partially — even its best part) to fulfill the functions of a single ruling party. Lenin explained that the party was insufficiently prepared for this role, first of all, because

taken as a whole (if we take the level of the overwhelming majority of party members), our party is less politically trained than is necessary for real proletarian leadership in the present difficult situation, especially in view of the tremendous preponderance of the peasantry, which is rapidly awakening to independent class politics.¹

Secondly, the strengthening of the internal and international situation of the country inevitably gave birth to “the temptation to join the governing party” on the part of careerist, petty-bourgeois elements, whose pressure on the party could grow to gigantic proportions. “If we do not close our eyes to reality,” Lenin added, “then we must admit that at the present time, the proletarian policy of the party is not determined by the character of its membership, but by the enormous, undivided authority enjoyed by the thinnest layer, which might be called the Old Guard of the Party. *A slight conflict within this group will be enough, if not to undermine its authority, then in any case to weaken it to such a degree*

that the resolution of the problem will no longer depend upon it.”² (The author’s italics – V. R.).

By the “Old Guard of the Party,” Lenin understood those Bolsheviks with pre-revolutionary membership, and also those who had entered the party in 1917. The size and proportion of this “ultra-thin layer” is suggested by the statistics published at the Thirteenth Party Congress, according to which 0.6 percent of the 600,000 party members on 1 May 1924 joined before 1905; 2 percent joined between 1905 and 1916; and less than 9 percent joined in 1917. It was precisely this portion of the party which, at the beginning of the 1920s, occupied nearly all the key posts in the leadership of the party and the country (both in the center and in the provinces).

Speaking for the first time about the possibility of a split in the party, Lenin saw the means of its prevention, above all, in efforts “to dismantle” the extreme concentration of power which had accumulated in the hands of a narrow circle of party leaders. He also wished to place all the leading party agencies under the control of the advanced worker-Communists, to create a system of political guarantees that would secure the freedom to express views and evaluations of the situation in the ranks of the only legal, governing, and therefore irreplaceable party. Only by those means would it be possible to guarantee an accounting of the social interests of all the laboring groups and layers of Soviet society and to guarantee free discussion of the problems hitherto not encountered in history, connected with the establishment of a new social order.

As we will see later, these ideas comprised the basic content of Lenin’s final works and, later, of the platforms of all the post-Lenin oppositions in the party. However, the subsequent development of events more than “override” the prognosis that Lenin considered to be the most unfavorable variant for the development of the party and the revolution. A series of splits occurred in the ranks of the party’s old guard; the internal struggle within this layer reached a maximum intensity; as a result, the authority of the party’s old guard was not only undermined, but its entire membership (with minor individual exceptions) was gradually removed from the political arena and then physically destroyed

by Stalin. By the end of the 1920s, political decisions would be made not by the will of this layer (not to mention the will of the party as an independent political entity), but rather by the individual will of Stalin.

At the beginning of the 1920s, such a course of development could not have seemed at all possible either to the leaders of the party, or to Stalin himself. Only a few initial moments in this development were foreseen by Lenin. In his last articles and letters, Lenin directed the party's attention to the possible influence of centrifugal forces within the party's old guard (primarily within the Central Committee) and proposed a system of political measures designed to stabilize the party and its Central Committee.

The articles and letters dictated by Lenin from December 1922 to March 1923 were the result of his intense reflection on how work in the Politburo and Central Committee might proceed if the further decline of his health forced him to disengage from direct political activity.

As we will see later, Lenin's warnings about the threat of a split were unexpected and were not assessed sufficiently, not only by the rank-and-file members of the party, but by a significant part of its leadership. Knowing better than anyone else both the history of the party, its latent tendencies, and the conflicts within its leadership, Lenin concluded that a split in the party was possible as the result of a series of seemingly accidental and insignificant circumstances. It is clear that during the final months of his participation in political activity, Lenin seriously reconsidered a large number of facts, only a portion of which have become known to us, and at that, only very recently.

Among the most interesting facts are those reported in 1989 by Nathan Steinberger, a veteran of the German Communist Party. Steinberger learned of these facts at the end of the 1930s from old Bolsheviks who were incarcerated with him in Stalin's prisons. Thus, V. I. Nevsky told him that the creation of the post of General Secretary and Stalin's appointment to it could be explained by the fact that, after the trade union discussion, Stalin used false rumors to convince Lenin that the party and the Central Committee faced the danger of splitting into factional groupings. According to Nevsky, Lenin later deeply regretted

that he had trusted Stalin and strove to correct this mistake in his “Testament.”²

Certain confirmation of these reports is contained in Trotsky’s concluding speech at the United Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission in October 1923. Trotsky said:

I was most of all concerned that the impression not be made that Trotsky was creating his own faction. And at one time, Vladimir Ilyich did fear that this was happening. After the Tenth Congress, V. I. was apprehensive. When I felt this, I appeared before him with the specific purpose of informing him that nothing of the sort was true. He and I had a long conversation, and it seems to me that I convinced him that I would not create any groupings or factions, and that I had no thoughts of doing so.⁴

From mid-1921, an ever more intimate rapprochement between Lenin and Trotsky began to develop. We do not encounter even the slightest expression of mistrust, unfriendliness, or estrangement toward Trotsky in any of Lenin’s documents after the Tenth Congress. Lenin’s many letters to Trotsky during this period, which address a broad range of theoretical issues, domestic policy, party, and Comintern problems, invariably maintain a respectful and comradely tone. In letters distributed to members of the Politburo and in his public speeches at that time, Lenin expressed a high evaluation of Trotsky’s qualities in the diplomatic and military spheres, and wrote with approval of his speeches on the issues of the New Economic Policy, philosophy, and other subjects.

Perhaps the only question on which Lenin doubted Trotsky’s position at that time regarded the role of Gosplan. However, in his letter intended for the Twelfth Congress, “On the Granting of Legislative Functions to Gosplan” (December 1922), Lenin wrote:

This idea was suggested by Comrade Trotsky, it seems, quite a long time ago. I was against it at the time ... But after closer consideration of the matter I find that, in essence, there is a sound idea in it ... In this regard, I think we can and must accede to the wishes of Comrade Trotsky ...⁵

Even earlier, Lenin had exerted no small effort to refute the rumors, persistently inflated over the course of many years, of the alleged cardinal political differences and hostile relations between himself and Trotsky. As

early as the beginning of 1919, both Lenin and Trotsky issued public rebuttals regarding these rumors that had circulated widely among the masses during the first years of Soviet power. Immediately before the Eighth Party Congress, which determined the party line toward the various layers of the peasantry, Lenin published an article simultaneously in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* (a unique occurrence, testifying to the major significance that Lenin attributed to this item). It was called, “A Reply to a Peasant’s Question.” The article contained a sharp refutation of the rumors, “alleging that Lenin and Trotsky are at odds, as if there are major disagreements between them, and in particular over the middle-peasant.”⁶

However, similar rumors were artificially inflated even in later years; moreover, it was becoming ever clearer that what was involved was deliberate intrigue emerging from the upper echelons of the party. Gorky vividly described Lenin’s reaction to all of this in the first version of his sketch, *V. I. Lenin*:

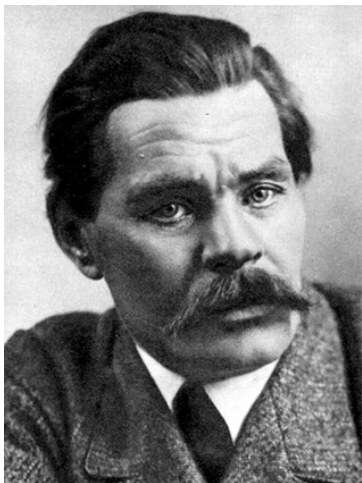
Lenin was capable of speaking about those, who, according to rumor, did not appear to enjoy his personal sympathies, but he gave their efforts their due.

Surprised by his flattering assessment of one such comrade, I noted that for many, such an assessment would be unexpected.

“Yes, yes, I know! They tell all sorts of lies about my relations with him. There are many lies, and, it seems, particularly many lies about me and Trotsky.”

Slamming his fist on the table, he said: “Show me another man who would be capable in one year of organizing an almost model army, and even win the respect of military specialists. We have such a man. We have everything! And there will be miracles!”⁷

This text was preserved in the numerous editions of Gorky’s memoirs about Lenin until 1931, when the next edition of the sketch *V. I. Lenin* contained text that sharply contradicted the original in its meaning. The last paragraph, which had contained a high assessment of Trotsky’s activity, was removed and replaced by a paragraph in which Lenin was quoted as saying about Trotsky: “But nevertheless, he is not ours! He is with us but — he is not ours!”⁸ Modern historians reasonably assume that the new variant of this part of the sketch appeared due to corrections



Maksim Gorky
(1868–1936)



Karl Danishevsky
(1884–1938)

made by Stalinist editors.

This assumption is confirmed by Stalinist words which appeared in the memoirs of Karl Danishevsky, published in the mid-1930s, when the campaign of the “anti-Trotskyist” reworking of history had reached its apogee. Danishevsky writes that Lenin supposedly told him in 1918:

Trotsky is a great man, energetic; he has done very much to draw the old officer corps into the Red Army; Trotsky has done a great deal to organize the Red Army. But he is not ours, he cannot fully be trusted.



Anastas Mikoyan, Iosif Stalin and Sergo Ordzhonikidze

Later, Danishevsky claimed that Lenin supposedly proposed that he “look after Trotsky” and report on his actions, even using a special code for this, after which a “special correspondence” arose between them.⁹ Meanwhile, only one letter from Danishevsky to Lenin has been found in the archives, and it contains not a single word about Trotsky.

Similar “evidence,” ascribing to Lenin conspiratorial methods of intrigue that were alien to him but that he supposedly used against party comrades, is contained in Anastas Mikoyan’s memoirs published in the early 1970s. In them Mikoyan describes how, at the beginning of 1922, he was summoned by Stalin, who gave him a secret task in connection with preparations for the Eleventh Party Congress.

Stalin declared that the principal danger at the Congress might come from Trotsky and his supporters. Since elections to the central bodies of the party would proceed not according to platforms, but according to considerations of the personal qualities of the candidates, then a relatively large number of “Trotskyists” might be elected to the Central Committee. Therefore it was advisable to ensure that among the delegates of the Congress there would be as few of them as possible.

In this regard, Stalin was particularly disturbed by Siberia, where “Trotskyists” enjoyed significant influence, and therefore the probability was high that many of them would be elected to the Congress.

Stalin suggested that Mikoyan travel to Novonikolaevsk (presently Novosibirsk) to see the Chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, Mikhail Lashevich, who “will take the necessary measures to ensure a smaller number of Trotskyists among the Siberian delegates.” Stalin added that Mikoyan should pretend to go to Siberia “as if on personal, family matters,” and to conceal from the other Siberian leaders any information he was given.

According to Mikoyan, Lenin unexpectedly entered the room during this conversation and asked: “Are you discussing your differences on the Caucasian question?” Stalin replied, as Mikoyan later wrote, that “he had conveyed all the arrangements to me, and that I agreed with everything and would go the day after next to see Lashevich.” Mikoyan added further that for some reason “he felt embarrassed by this unexpected encounter with Lenin and hurried to leave, having said goodbye to Lenin and Stalin.”¹⁰

Today, it is difficult to say why Mikoyan, whose intellect and political experience¹¹ cannot be denied, half a century after this event, without embellishing either the event itself, or the man whom he served unquestioningly over the course of many years, decided to make such a candid confession. He understood very well that his testimony could be refuted neither by documents (after all, this behind-the-scenes machination by Stalin proceeded in the form of confidential verbal negotiations and left no written traces), nor by recollections of the other participants in the events (they had all passed away long before the publication of Mikoyan’s memoirs).

The fundamental outline of Mikoyan’s account, in our view, does not raise many doubts, insofar as it conveys so clearly Stalin’s penchant for intrigue. Indirect confirmation of this report lies in the fact that Mikoyan was “rewarded” for his participation in the conspiratorial Stalinist intrigue: at the Eleventh Congress, for the first time, Mikoyan was elected a candidate-member of the Central Committee.

In addition, one cannot deny the persuasiveness of the commentary made by the old Bolshevik A. Zimin regarding this fragment of Mikoyan's recollections:

Of course, Mikoyan would not have been himself had he not implicated Lenin in this Stalinist "undertaking," which was not only anti-party and amoral, but also constituted a serious crime against the party and bore the character of an *inner-party conspiracy*. Stalin, you see, told him that he was passing on Lenin's instructions. It is highly probable that Stalin did indeed say this: Stalin was trying to conceal his outrages against the Bolshevik Party and its party norms by hiding behind Lenin's name. But it would not be surprising if it turned out that Mikoyan himself had fabricated this reference to Lenin in order to exonerate himself in the eyes of the contemporary reader for carrying out Stalin's proposal. One way or another, we are confronted with a dirty insinuation against Lenin; but then, it was completely in the neo-Stalinist manner to falsify the political portrait of Lenin and to depict Leninism as a prototype of Stalinism. Lenin was organically alien to and disgusted by intrigues in inner-party relations, not to mention secret machinations to rig a Party Congress. Furthermore, Lenin had no reason either to fear Trotsky or to be alarmed about his authority and success in the party, especially during this period of growing mutual trust, when they were drawing more closely together, both politically and personally. Stalin, however, as we have seen, by virtue of his character and his plans, *could have* been filled with envy, hatred, suspicion, and fear in his attitude toward Trotsky.¹²

From 1921 Stalin began to intrigue against Lenin as well, not fearing even to enter into sharp conflicts with him. This is supported, in particular, by M. I. Ulyanova's notes, which she recorded after reflecting on the true character of the relations between Lenin and Stalin during the final years of Lenin's life. She noted that even before the summer of 1922 she had heard of Lenin's dissatisfaction with Stalin. In confirmation, Ulyanova wrote:

I was told, that after learning about Martov's illness, Vladimir Ilyich asked Stalin to send Martov money. Stalin replied, "You want me to waste money on an enemy of the workers' cause! Find yourself another secretary for that." Lenin was very upset by this and became very angry at Stalin.¹³

Later, Ulyanova wrote that Lenin had other reasons as well to be displeased with Stalin. For one example, she referred to an account by the old Bolshevik Grigory Shklovsky regarding a letter to him from Lenin,



Yulii Osipovich Martov
(1873–1923)



Grigory Lvovich Shklovsky
(1875–1937)

from which “it was apparent that Vladimir Ilyich was being, so to speak, undermined. By whom and how — that remained a secret.”¹⁴

In this letter, written on 4 July 1921 and published in full for the first time only in 1989, Lenin states:

You are completely correct that to accuse me of “protectionism” in this case is the height of savagery and vileness. I repeat, the intrigue here is complex. They are *taking advantage* of the deaths of Sverdlov, Zagorsky, and others. ... There is both prejudice, stubborn opposition, and a profound distrust *toward me* in this question. This is extremely painful to me. But it is a fact ... I have seen other such examples in our party now. The “new” have arrived, and they do not know the elders. Make a recommendation and you are not trusted. Repeat the recommendation and the distrust increases, obstinacy is born: “But that’s not what we want!!!”¹⁵

From the contents of the letter, it is not clear exactly with whom and over what Lenin had a conflict in the given case, but it is fully clear that by that time Lenin often had to face sharp opposition to his proposals and even “complex intrigues” against him (primarily, it appears, in

questions regarding the assignments of the highest party cadres, which the Orgburo of the Central Committee managed).

The activation of Stalin's conspiratorial activity in 1921–1922 was aided by Lenin's frequent inability to participate directly in the work of the central organs of the party and government as a result of his deteriorating health. At the beginning of December 1921, Lenin was forced, on instructions from his doctors, to leave for the countryside on the outskirts of Moscow. For several months, he participated in work only through meetings with individual party leaders and through letters he sent to the Central Committee. He returned to Moscow only for a few weeks in April 1922, and in May he suffered his first stroke, after which for two months he was no longer capable of moving about, speaking, or writing.

During those very months, a triumvirate ("troika"), consisting of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, began to form. Gradually, it started conspiring not only against Trotsky, but also against the ailing Lenin.

Among the members of the triumvirate, Kamenev and Zinoviev enjoyed in this period much greater authority and fame than Stalin, and they occupied much higher posts (by the standards of that time). From the moment the Comintern was formed, Zinoviev had been chairman of its Executive Committee, i.e., he occupied a post that was formally much higher than any post in the party, since the RKP(b), like all other Communist parties, was considered a section in the Comintern. In addition, Zinoviev was chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and in fact led the Petrograd party organization — the party's most important organization.



Iosif Stalin, Aleksei Rykov, Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev

Kamenev was chairman of the Moscow Soviet, deputy chairman of both the SNK [Council of People's Commissars] and STO [Council of Labor and Defense], and, during Lenin's illness, replaced him as leader of these main state organizations. In Lenin's absence, he chaired sessions of the Politburo and continued to carry out this function after Lenin's death right up to the Fourteenth Party Congress. During his illness, Lenin handed over his archive to Kamenev. Out of this archive, the Lenin Institute arose, and Kamenev became its first director.

Stalin was the only person who, from 1919, was simultaneously a member of the Politburo and the Orgburo. Until the Eleventh Congress, he led two People's Commissariats: the Commissariat on Nationalities and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection [Rabkrin]. After he was elected General Secretary, he was relieved of these two posts. Although this election signified a formal increase in Stalin's status, the post of

General Secretary was as before considered to be a technical, and the Secretariat, an executive organ of the Politburo.

Evidently, Kamenev and Zinoviev assumed that during Lenin's illness they would conduct the political and ideological leadership of the party, and Stalin would perform its organizational functions, which they considered secondary. It was they who became initiators of intrigues against Trotsky in order to weaken his exceptional authority and popularity in the party and the nation. Feeling themselves to be the sole legitimate successors to Lenin on the grounds that they had been his closest entourage for almost a decade before the October Revolution, they used Trotsky's "non-Bolshevism," i.e., his existence prior to August 1917 outside the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, to diminish his political role and prestige. It was precisely their hostility to Trotsky that brought them closer to Stalin, whose relations with Trotsky, as Lenin so perceptively saw by the end of 1922, constituted "the greater part of the danger ... of a split" within the Central Committee.¹⁶

In July 1922, Lenin's health began to improve. While continuing to reside in the countryside, he followed all the political news. Through meetings with comrades and the exchange of notes he also took part in the work of the Politburo. During this period, Lenin learned of the attempt by the triumvirate to remove Trotsky from the leadership. Lenin responded to a proposal to that effect with an extremely nervous note to Kamenev, from which it followed that he considered the proposal to be a dirty intrigue directed not only against Trotsky, but against himself, Lenin. The memo reads:

I think that we can avoid exaggerations. "[The Central Committee] is throwing, or is prepared to throw, a good cannon overboard," you write. Isn't this really an immense exaggeration? To throw Trotsky overboard — that is what you are hinting at. It is impossible to interpret it otherwise — This is the height of absurdity. If you do not consider me to have become hopelessly stupid, then how could you think this!!! Bloodied children before my eyes ...

¹⁷

Later, after their rapprochement with Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev told him a number of facts regarding their own intrigues against him

carried out during their alliance with Stalin, but they apparently remained silent about this note written by Lenin. Otherwise, Trotsky, who reacted with extreme sensitivity to Stalinist fabrications about supposedly hostile relations between himself and Lenin, and who therefore devoted particular attention to the smallest facts revealing the true character of these relations, definitely would have mentioned this memo.

Vladimir Naumov, who published the memo in question, believes that it was written after Lenin's return to Moscow on 2 October 1922. In that case, we may presume that the triumvirate's intrigue, which provoked such a sharp rebuttal from Lenin, served as a response to Lenin's proposal to the Politburo in September that Trotsky be confirmed as First Deputy Chairman of the Sovnarkom; that is, that the Politburo entrust him with the highest governmental post, given that Lenin's illness might become more prolonged or acute.



Lev Davidovich Trotsky
(1879–1940)

Trotsky turned down the proposal. Explaining the reasons for his refusal at the October Plenum of the Central Committee in 1923, he

referred to “one individual feature of mine, which, although it plays no role whatsoever in my personal life, so to speak, or in day-to-day life, carries a great political significance. That is my Jewish origin.”¹⁸ In this regard, Trotsky recalled that, for the same reasons, he had rejected the proposal by Lenin on 25 October 1917 to appoint him People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs. He felt that “we cannot place such a trump card into the hands of our enemies ... It will be much better if there is not a single Jew in the first revolutionary Soviet government,”¹⁹ otherwise counter-revolutionary forces would be able to exploit the darkest prejudices of the masses by depicting the October Revolution as a “Jewish revolution.”

No less resolute were Trotsky’s objections, for the very same reasons, to his appointment to the posts of Commissar of Foreign Affairs and Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs. Assessing his position in retrospect, Trotsky said:

After all the work I performed in that sphere, I can say with complete confidence that I was correct ... Perhaps I could have done much more if the issue had not driven a wedge into my work and interfered. Remember how severely the knowledge that a Jew stood at the head of the Red Army had interfered during the tense moments of the offensives by Yudenich, Kolchak, and Wrangel, and how our enemies took advantage of it in their agitation ... I never forgot that. Vladimir Ilyich considered this an eccentricity of mine, and more than once said so in conversations with me and with other comrades, referring to it as my eccentricity. And when Vladimir Ilyich suggested that I become Deputy Chair of Sovnarkom (the sole Deputy), I also firmly refused for the same reasons, in order to avoid giving our enemies cause to assert that the country was being governed by a Jew.²⁰

It appears that Trotsky decided to dismiss this reason, or “eccentricity,” only when Lenin told him at the end of November or the beginning of December 1922 that he felt the energy he could devote to his administrative work was limited, and therefore proposed again that Trotsky become Deputy Chairman of Sovnarkom. Trotsky’s principled acceptance of this proposal, in our view, was determined by events that had unfolded after Stalin’s election as General Secretary.

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1. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 45, С. 19, 20 [Lenin, CW, Volume 33, "On the Conditions for Admitting New Members into the Party," 24 March 1922, p. 256].
 2. Ibid., p. 257.
 3. See: *Вопросы истории* [Problems of History], 1989, № 9, pp. 175, 176.
 4. *Вопросы истории КПСС* [Problems of History of the CPSU], 1990, № 5, p. 37. In addition, Trotsky said: "Comrades, I did not deceive him. I brought to the surface nothing that could be understood as disagreement with or criticism of the actions of the Central Committee." Trotsky followed this tactic, as we will see further on, for several months after Lenin's departure from the leadership. Trotsky's refusal to unite his supporters in a timely manner was one of the main subjective reasons for the defeat of the Left Opposition in the future.
 5. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 45, С. 349, 350 [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, "Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission," 27 December 1922, pp. 598, 599].
 6. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 37, С. 478 [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, "Reply to a Peasant's Question," 14 February 1919, p. 500].
 7. *Комсомольская правда*, 1990, 21 января [Komsomol Pravda, 21 January 1990].
 8. *Воспоминания о В. И. Ленине*, Т. 2, М., 1984, С. 266 [Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin, Volume 2, Moscow, 1984, p. 266].
 9. *Воспоминания о В. И. Ленине*, Т. 3, М., 1969, С. 451 [Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin, Volume 3, Moscow, 1969, p. 451].
 10. Микоян, А. И. *Мысли и воспоминания о В. И. Ленине*, М., 1970, С. 194–195 [A. I. Mikoyan, *Thoughts and Reminiscences about V. I. Lenin*, Moscow, 1970, pp. 194–195].
 11. Mikoyan's unprecedented political resourcefulness can be seen by the fact that he was a member of the Central Committee for forty-four years — much longer than any other member of the Central Committee.
 12. Зимин, А., *У истоков сталинизма, 1918–1923*, Париж, 1984, С. 400–401 [A. Zimin, *The Sources of Stalinism. 1918–1923*, Paris, 1984, pp. 400–401].
 13. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 197 [Information of the CC, CPSU, 1989, № 12, p. 197].
 14. Там же [Ibid.].
 15. Там же, С. 201 [Ibid., p. 201].
 16. Ленин, ПСС, Т. 45, С. 344 [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, "Letter to the Congress, II," 24 December 1922, p. 594].
 17. Цит. по: Наумов, В., 1923 год: судьба ленинской альтернативы, *Коммунист* [Cited by: V. Naumov, 1923: "The Fate of a Leninist Alternative," *Communist*] 1991, № 5, С. 36 [See: *The Unknown Lenin. From the Secret Archive*, Yale University Press, 1996, p. 166]. The phrase, "Bloodied children before my eyes" is from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, where the main character sees visions of children murdered in the struggle to gain the throne.
 18. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 36 [Questions of the History of the CPSU, 1990, № 5, p. 36].

[19.](#) Там же [Ibid.].

[20.](#) Там же [Ibid.].

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!

ПРОЖЕКТОР

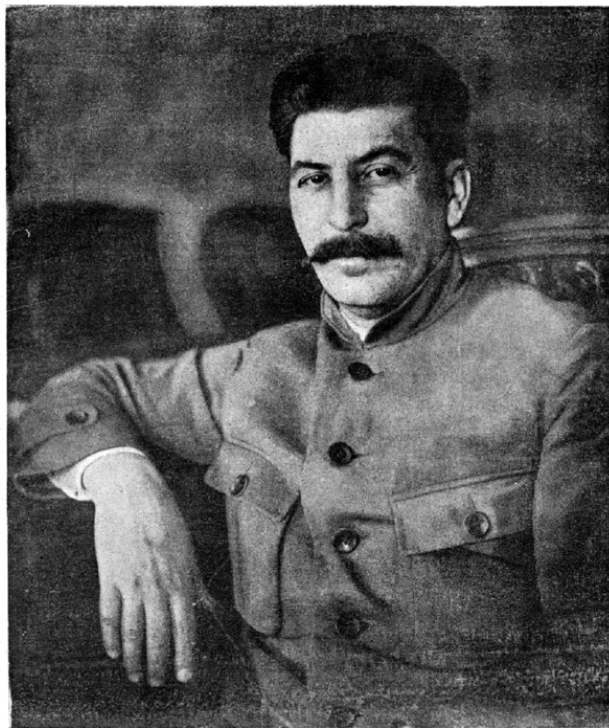
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31 мая. 1923 г.

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В о ж д и Р. К. П.

Фот. С. Брендбург.



И. Сталин. Секретарь Ц. К. Р. К. П.

*I. Stalin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the RKP, in the journal **Prozhektor**, 31 May 1923.*

6. The General Secretary: Organizer and Mentor of the Bureaucracy

Stalin's election to the post of General Secretary occurred after the Eleventh Party Congress (March-April 1922), in which Lenin, due to his poor health, participated only sporadically (he attended four out of twelve sessions of the Congress). Trotsky recalled:

At the Eleventh Congress ... Zinoviev and his closest friends proposed Stalin's candidacy to the post of General Secretary, with the ulterior motive of utilizing his hostile attitude toward me. While expressing to a close circle his objection to Stalin's appointment as General Secretary, Lenin uttered his famous phrase: "This chef will prepare only spicy dishes." Victory at the Congress, however, belonged to the Petrograd delegation led by Zinoviev. Their victory came all the more easily because Lenin did not engage in battle. He did not take his resistance to Stalin's candidacy all the way only because the post of General Secretary, under the conditions at that time, was still of a completely subordinate significance. Lenin himself did not wish to attach exaggerated significance to his own warning: while the old Politburo was still in power, the General Secretary could be no more than a subordinate figure.¹

Having assumed the post of General Secretary, Stalin immediately seized all the levers of the party's policy toward cadre assignments. Through the secretaries of both the Central Committee and the Registration and Distribution Department [*Uchraspred*] subordinate to the Central Committee, he began on a scale unprecedented at that time to practice methods of apparatus selection, appointment, and reassignment of party and other leading officials. According to his own

words, in 1922 alone, “10,700 people passed through the *Uchraspred*; of them, 5,167 senior officials were placed by the CC.”²

At the Twelfth Party Conference, which met during Lenin’s illness in August 1922, amendments were made to the Party Statutes that substantially restricted inner-party democracy. Times were extended between convening all-union, provincial, and district conferences, and confirmation of the secretaries of lower-level party organizations by higher-level authorities was established, which, in fact, favored the “appointment system” of secretaries.

At the same time, Stalin, together with Zinoviev and Kamenev, began to broaden significantly the material privileges of the party’s leading officials. The same Twelfth Conference, for the first time in party history, approved a document legalizing these privileges. The conference resolution, “On the Material Status of Active Party Workers,” designated clearly the number of “active Party workers” (15,325 persons) and introduced a strict hierarchy of their placement into six ranks. Due to receive payment according to the highest rank were members of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission, heads of Central Committee departments, the members of the regional bureaus of the Central Committee, and the secretaries of the regional and provincial committees. The resolution also provided for the possibility of a personal increase in their salaries. As a supplement to their high wages, all the designated officials were to be “provided secure living conditions (through local executive committees), medical care (through the Commissariat of Health), care and education for their children (through the Commissariat of Enlightenment),”³ as well as additional corresponding natural goods paid for from the party fund.

Trotsky emphasized that during Lenin’s illness Stalin began to act more and more “as the organizer and mentor of the bureaucracy, and, above all, as the provider of earthly blessings.”⁴ This period coincided with the end of the bivouac-like period of the civil war.

The more settled and balanced life of a bureaucracy begets the desire for a comfortable life. Stalin, while continuing to live relatively modestly himself, at least by all external appearances, mastered this movement toward a

comfortable life; he allotted the more advantageous posts, singled out the loyal people, awarded them, and helped them to elevate their own privileged positions.⁵

These actions by Stalin fulfilled the aspiration of the bureaucracy to liberate itself from strict control in the moral and personal spheres of life, the need for which had been indicated in the many party decisions of the Leninist period. The bureaucracy, which more and more embraced the perspective of personal prosperity and well-being,

respected Lenin, but felt too oppressed by the weight of his puritanical hand upon its shoulder. It was searching for a leader in its own image, a first among equals. About Stalin they said ... "We do not fear Stalin. If he begins to put on airs, we will remove him." The sudden change in living conditions of the bureaucracy coincided with Lenin's final illness and the beginning of the campaign against "Trotskyism." In any political struggle on such a scale it is possible, in the end, to raise the question of beefsteak.⁶

Stalin's more provocative actions in the creation of illegal and secret privileges for the bureaucracy at that time still encountered resistance from his supporters. Thus, after the acceptance in July 1923 of the Politburo's decree to ease the conditions of entry into institutes of higher education for the children of senior officials, Zinoviev, who was resting on leave in Kislovodsk, condemned the decision and declared that "such a privilege will block the path to the more gifted students and introduce elements of a caste system. It won't do."⁷

The complaisant attitude toward privileges and the willingness to take them for granted represented the first turn in the personal and moral degeneration of the partocracy, which would inevitably be followed by a political degeneration: the willingness to sacrifice ideas and principles for the sake of preserving its posts and privileges.

The ties of revolutionary solidarity, which bound the Party together as a whole, were replaced to a significant degree by ties of bureaucratic and material dependence. Earlier it was possible to win over supporters only with ideas. Now many began to learn to win over supporters with posts and material privileges.⁸

These processes facilitated the rapid growth of bureaucratism and intrigues in the party and state apparatus; when he returned to work in October 1922, Lenin was literally shocked by this. As Trotsky recalled:

Returning to work and with increasing anxiety noting the changes that had taken place over the last ten months, Lenin for the time being did not refer to them aloud, so as not to strain relations. But he was preparing to rebuff the “troika” and began to do so on separate issues.⁹

One of those issues concerned the monopoly on foreign trade. In November 1922, in the absence of Lenin and Trotsky, the Central Committee unanimously adopted a resolution directed at weakening this monopoly. In a letter sent to Stalin for distribution to members of the CC, Lenin categorically objected to this resolution and proposed to return to this question at the next plenum. After receiving this letter, Stalin, Zinoviev, and Bukharin confirmed their disagreement with Lenin’s position.

Having learned that Trotsky also did not agree with the adopted resolution, Lenin began to correspond with him (Lenin’s five letters to Trotsky on this issue were first published in the USSR only in 1965). Seeing that due to his worsening health he would not be able to attend the next plenum of the CC, Lenin asked Trotsky “to take on yourself ... the defense of our common viewpoint” and “to declare at the plenum our solidarity.” Assuming that at the next plenum “we are threatened with failure,” he proposed that “in the case of our defeat on this question, ... raise the question at the party congress.”¹⁰ However, as a result of the concerted actions of Lenin and Trotsky, at the next plenum the Central Committee revoked its decision made just a month before. In regard to this development, Lenin dictated to his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, a letter to Trotsky in which he stated:

It looks as if we managed to take the position by means of a simple maneuver, without firing a single shot. I propose that we not stop, but continue the offensive ...¹¹

At the end of November 1922, Lenin and Trotsky had a conversation in which the latter raised the question of the growth of bureaucratism in

the apparatus. “Yes, our bureaucratism is monstrous,” Lenin joined in, “I was horrified after returning to work. ...” Trotsky added that he had in mind not only state, but also party bureaucratism, and that the essence of all the difficulties, in his opinion, lay in the combination of state and party bureaucratism, and in the mutual concealment of influential groups, who gathered together around a hierarchy of party secretaries.

Having heard this, Lenin raised the question point-blank: “Then are you proposing to wage a struggle not only against state bureaucratism, but also against the Orgburo of the Central Committee?” The Orgburo represented the very heart of Stalin’s apparatus. Trotsky replied, “I suppose I am.” “Well then,” Lenin rejoined, clearly satisfied that they had identified the heart of the matter, “I propose to you a bloc: against bureaucratism in general and against the Orgburo in particular.” Trotsky answered, “With a good person it is flattering to form a good bloc.” In conclusion it was agreed to meet after some time in order to discuss the organizational side of the question. As a preliminary, Lenin proposed to create within the Central Committee a commission for the struggle against bureaucratism. “In essence,” Trotsky recalled, “this commission was to become the linchpin for destroying the Stalin faction as the backbone of the bureaucracy ...”¹²

A few days after this conversation, a new and severe turn in Lenin’s illness occurred, forcing him to take his final leave. On 18 December, a plenum of the CC made Stalin responsible for supervising the regimen established for Lenin by his physicians. Stalin fulfilled this assignment with the utmost cruelty: he immediately banned any correspondence or meetings between Lenin and party comrades; he demanded that family members and Lenin’s secretaries not provide him with any political information. In these conditions, on 24 December Lenin made a minimal, but categorical demand: either he would be allowed to dictate his “Diary,” or he would refuse treatment. A day before this, he had already begun to dictate what he called a “Diary.”

¹². Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, М., 1990, С. 189 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *Stalin*, ed. Alan Woods, Wellred Books, 2016, p. 493].

- [2.](#) Сталин, И. В., Необходимое замечание (о тов. Рафаиле), *Правда*, 28 декабря 1923 [I. V. Stalin, “A Necessary Note (On Comrade Rafail),” *Pravda*, 28 December 1923].
- [3.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 2, С. 597 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 2, p. 597].
- [4.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 238 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 655].
- [5.](#) Там же, С. 239 [Ibid., p. 659].
- [6.](#) Там же, С. 207 [Ibid., pp. 658, 664, unlocatable].
- [7.](#) Известия ЦК КПСС, 1991, № 4, С. 202 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 202].
- [8.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 248 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 545].
- [9.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, М, 1991, С. 452 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, Pathfinder Press, 1970, p. 476].
- [10.](#) Ленин, ПСС, Т. 54, С. 324–326 [Lenin, CW, Volume 45, “To L. D. Trotsky,” 13 December 1922, p. 600].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 327–328 [Ibid., “To L. D. Trotsky,” 21 December 1922, p. 606].
- [12.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 455 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 478–479].

7. The “Testament”

The work on the “Diary” led to the creation of Lenin’s last eight articles, which in historical and party literature are called his “last testament,” in the broad sense of the word. Lenin did not designate the first three of them — the “Letter to the Congress,” “On the Granting of Legislative Functions to Gosplan,” and “On the Question of Nationalities, or ‘Autonomization,’” — for immediate publication. It is evident that he prepared them as speeches for the Twelfth Party Congress. Immediately after dictation, he sent three of the articles (“Pages from the Diary,” “How We Must Reorganize Rabkrin,” and “Better Fewer, but Better”) to *Pravda* for publication as material for pre-Congress discussion. He evidently thought that two articles (“On Cooperation” and “On Our Revolution”) were not fully complete; they were published in the months when he was in a semi-conscious state and was no longer able to give any kind of instructions.

Five of the last articles reached the Soviet reader in 1923; the remaining works, as well as three of Lenin’s letters of this period, were published in the Soviet Union only after the Twentieth Party Congress.

At least three of Lenin’s last articles had an extraordinarily dramatic fate. This concerns, most of all, the “Letter to the Congress,” the work known in the party as Lenin’s “Testament.” On the one hand, it developed ideas regarding the danger of destroying unity in the ranks of the party’s old guard; on the other, it included proposals for creating guarantees aimed at preventing a split in the party and its Central Committee. As a group, these proposals constituted a plan of political reform, which,

together with the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary, should have struck a blow against bureaucracy — both in the state and party — and sharply changed the inner-party regime in the direction of its democratization.

Feeling that the proletarian character of party policy, by virtue of the historical circumstances that had developed, was determined by the unity of its most slender layer, Lenin envisioned the reasons for a possible split in the party, not in the breakdown of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry (this danger, he felt, could be overcome if the party followed the correct class policy), but in the emergence of an internal struggle in the ranks of the party's old guard. Recognition of this danger determined how Lenin posed the question of the role of historical contingency in the fates of the party and revolution.

In the "Letter to the Congress," and in Lenin's last articles developing his ideas, there are no warnings about the real threat of the emergence in the party of any ideological "isms" hostile to Bolshevism. However, much was said about such subjective moments as the practical and moral qualities of its leaders and their personal relations.

According to Lenin's thoughts, in the concrete conditions that developed toward the end of 1922, it was precisely these subjective and accidental (in comparison to major social processes and to the dynamics of great class forces) circumstances, that might acquire "overly excessive importance for all the party's fortunes" and "inadvertently lead to a split"; moreover, if "the party fails to take measures to prevent this, ... then a split might occur unexpectedly."¹

It is precisely in the light of these basic ideas in the "Letter to the Congress" that one can explain what appears at first glance to be a departure from traditional "Party History" principles in this work. Lenin saw the causes of the instability, and even the possibility of a split in the party, not in the class contradictions of Soviet society, but in the conflicts between small sections of the CC, in the hostile relations between "the two outstanding leaders of the present CC."² However, Lenin's brilliant perceptiveness was revealed precisely in such an approach; he was pointing to the most unwanted alternative development of the party and

revolution, which, unfortunately, became a reality. Because of the unfinished nature of democratic mechanisms inside the ruling party, and the preservation of limitations on inner-party democracy that had been necessary due to the extreme situation of civil war, Stalin's negative traits, multiplied by the "unlimited power" concentrated in his hands, might acquire "decisive significance" for the destinies of the party and revolution.³

From the "Letter to the Congress," it is very clear where Lenin saw an obstacle to establishing cordial functioning in the Central Committee: in the striving he knew well, by several of his comrades, to use past inner-party disagreements in order to discredit their opponents and, in doing so, to weaken their influence and role in the party. The last circumstance evidently caused Lenin to warn against "placing personal blame" on party leaders for their earlier political mistakes (it was precisely these methods, as we will see later, which occupied an inordinately great place in all the subsequent party discussions).

The logic of Lenin's arguments regarding the relations between Stalin and Trotsky, which entailed, he believed, "the greater half of the danger of a split," is presented quite clearly in the "Testament." Lenin noted Trotsky's extreme self-confidence and his extreme concern with the purely administrative side of a matter, but at the same time called him the "most capable man in the present Central Committee" and warned against criticizing Trotsky for his "non-Bolshevism," that is, his position outside the ranks of the Bolshevik Party before July 1917. Further, Lenin enumerated Stalin's many negative qualities. With these in mind, as well as the relations between Stalin and Trotsky, Lenin proposed that the Congress remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary in order to prevent a split in the Central Committee and the party. That is, he proposed to deprive Stalin of the administrative power he had seized, having substantially exceeded the power granted to him by this post.

Of course, the content of the "Letter to the Congress" cannot be reduced to this single personal recommendation contained within it. The basic meaning of this work was that it advanced a plan for political reform which had the goal of "defusing" the excessive concentration of

power in the hands of a narrow circle of party leaders that had arisen by that time. It also aimed at creating firm democratic guarantees against the possible usurpation of the functions of the party and its Central Committee by an oligarchy of “leaders,” or even more so by a solitary “leader.”

Insufficient understanding of these basic ideas in the “Letter to the Congress” has led to suppositions by several researchers about why Lenin did not designate in his “Letter to the Congress” the name of his “successor,” “the main leader” of the party. The entire history of Lenin’s attitude to the party testifies to his feeling that the presence in the party of a “main leader” standing above its collective leadership was illegitimate.

There is evidence that, even in the period of his active work, Lenin thought deeply about how to prevent the transformation of the Central Committee into an ossified party oligarchy. In Mariya I. Ulyanova’s diary there is an entry devoted to the summer of 1922:

Ilyich started to develop the idea that the CC should have people of various generations: 50-40-30-20 years old. Thus, the young people could be drawn into the work of the CC, have a good look around and get accustomed to it. ... Obviously, this idea very much interests Ilyich. ... He pointed to the necessity of creating a special commission, which would be entrusted with such a “selection” and “promotion” of young leaders.⁴

In the texts of the dictations of 23–25 December, Lenin proposed a concrete mechanism of rotating and renewing the composition of the Central Committee, by increasing the number of its members to fifty or one hundred. By their combined influence they might restrain the centrifugal tendencies inside the Politburo and diminish the role of personal conflicts within it. Ten days later, however, Lenin found this proposal insufficient and therefore made an addendum, which was entirely devoted to substantiating his advice about the need to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary.

The concluding proposal of the Testament unambiguously indicates what Lenin regarded as the source of the danger. To dismiss Stalin — specifically him and only him — meant to tear him away from the apparatus ... to

deprive him of all the power which he had concentrated in his hands through his position.⁵

Fearing, apparently, that to familiarize the Politburo with the “Testament” prematurely might provoke a new wave of intrigues and a sharpening of the internal struggle in the party leadership, Lenin gave his secretaries categorical instructions during the dictation of this document that the letter was to remain absolutely secret and that its copies were to remain in sealed envelopes which could be opened only by him and (in case of his death) by his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya.

In my view, this directive is explained by the fact that, in the period when Lenin was working on the “Letter to the Congress,” he did not exclude two possibilities: first, that he might die before the opening of the Twelfth Congress; and second, that his health might improve enough to allow him to take immediate part in the work of the congress. The likelihood of his attendance at the congress was assumed by him right up until the severe and sudden recurrence of his illness, which began on 6 March 1923; after this he was fully cut off from political activity. On that very day, as the last note he dictated indicates, he considered that it would be possible to speak at the congress — to deliver a “bomb” against Stalin.

As recently published documents and testimonies of Lenin’s secretaries indicate, one of them, M.A. Volodicheva, on the day of the dictation of the first part of the letter — the part which indicated the danger of “conflicts among small sections of the Central Committee” and the first hint of political reform — passed that part of the letter on to Stalin. Having read this document, Stalin, not knowing that there were copies, proposed that Volodicheva burn it.

Several days later, Fotieva, to whom Lenin confirmed his decision regarding the secret nature of the letter, could not bring herself to tell him of Volodicheva’s action and left him assured that no one knew about the letter. On 29 December, Fotieva informed Kamenev orally about the disclosure of the first part of the letter, despite Lenin’s prohibition. Kamenev asked her to submit a written explanation. From Fotieva’s letter on this question, and from the postscripts by Trotsky and Stalin on the

letter, it follows that by this time the contents of this part of Lenin's document were familiar to Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin, and Ordzhonikidze. Stalin and Trotsky confirmed that they had informed no one else about the document.

The volumes, *Communist Opposition in the USSR*, first published the document found in the Trotsky archive, "Summary of Notes by Members of the CC on Comrade Zinoviev's Proposal." The editor, Yuri Felshtinsky, incorrectly indicates that this document is a written survey of members and candidate-members of the Politburo about the possible publication of the "Letter to the Congress." Actually, this survey was conducted in connection with Krupskaya's handing over to the CC in June 1923 of another document by Lenin, the article "On the Granting of Legislative Functions to Gosplan." Unlike Trotsky, who spoke unequivocally for publishing it, the remaining nine participants in the survey spoke just as unambiguously against its publication. As he did so, Kamenev justified such a ban by saying, "This was a speech never given at the Politburo, nothing more." Tomsy added, "Among the broad public, no one here will understand anything."⁶

When, and to which ones among the leaders of the time, did the "Letter to the Congress" become known in full, including the advice regarding Stalin? Recently published correspondence between the leaders of the ruling fraction helps provide an answer to this question. The correspondence dates from July and August 1923, when the relations between Stalin and his allies of the time had become noticeably strained. In a letter to Kamenev from Kislovodsk on July 23, Zinoviev, who was upset by Stalin's unilateral decisions, wrote that "Ilyich was a thousand times correct,"⁷ clearly referring to Lenin's characterization of Stalin in the "Testament." Having learned of this from Kamenev, Stalin evidently expressed his displeasure with allusions to "a letter by Ilyich, unknown to me, regarding the Secretary."⁸ In reply, Zinoviev and Bukharin informed him that "there exists a letter by V. I., in which he advises (the Twelfth Party Congress) not to elect you Secretary." Later in the letter, it was explained that Bukharin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev "decided for the time

being not to inform you about it (the letter – V. R.). For an understandable reason: you have always reacted to disagreements with V. I. too subjectively, and we did not wish to irritate you.”²

Two conclusions may be drawn from these letters. First, in July 1923 at least three people — Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Bukharin — either were familiar with the full text of the “Letter to the Congress,” or knew (evidently from Krupskaya) about the advice contained in it to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary. Second, Stalin, at least according to the information possessed by these three figures, was still unfamiliar with the contents of the “Letter to the Congress” (with the exception of the first dictation of 23 December 1922) as of July 1923.

Apparently, the question of publishing the “Testament” was first raised at the time of Lenin’s funeral. On 30 January 1924, the commission of the Central Executive Committee for organizing Lenin’s funeral discussed the question “On Comrade Dzerzhinsky’s Prohibition on Publishing Lenin’s ‘Testament,’” and decreed: “To Forbid the Publication of the ‘Testament.’”¹⁰

The subsequent fate of the “Testament” will be examined in the following chapters of this book.

1. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 343, 345. [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, “Letter to the Congress,” 23 December 1922, p. 593].

2. Там же, С. 345 [Ibid., 24–25 December 1922, p. 595].

3. Там же, С. 346 [Ibid.].

4. Цит. по: Ярославский, Е., *Против оппозиции*, М.-Л., 1928, С. 255 [In: E. Yaroslavsky, *Against the Opposition*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928, p. 255].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д. Портреты революционеров, М., 1991, С. 271–272 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, “On Lenin’s Testament,” December 31, 1932, in *The Suppressed Testament of Lenin*, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1946, p. 19].

6. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, М., 1990, Т. 1, С. 56 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Moscow, 1990, Volume 1, p. 56].

7. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 198 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 198].

8. Там же, С. 203 [Ibid., p. 203].

9. Там же, С. 205 [Ibid., p. 205].

10. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 6, С. 200 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 6, p. 198].



Montage in the journal *Prozhektor*, № 18, 1 November 1923, celebrating the Sixth Anniversary of the October Revolution.
 Lenin and Trotsky are prominently displayed.

8. For Immediate Publication

The ideas about political reform contained in the “Letter to the Congress” were developed and concretized in two articles that Lenin intended for “immediate publication”: “How We Should Reorganize the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection” and “Better Fewer, but Better.” In them, he proposed a plan to fundamentally restructure the political system of Soviet society through party and state reform of its higher levels. This reform envisioned unifying the Central Control Commission [CCC] and Rabkrin [The People’s Commissariat of Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection] and significantly broadening the powers of these institutions. The main thrust of the reorganization proposed by Lenin was directed against the extreme concentration of power in the hands of the Politburo, Orgburo, Secretariat, and Stalin personally. Lenin proposed that the Twelfth Congress increase the membership and rights of the Central Control Commission, and with this aim, to add from seventy-five to one hundred new members, drawn from rank-and-file workers and peasants, who were to be granted rights equal to those of Central Committee members.

These ideas represented a development of the resolutions of the Ninth Conference of the RKP(b) in 1920, which recognized the necessity of creating a Central Control Commission “consisting of comrades having the greatest party preparation, the most experienced, impartial, and capable of carrying out strict party control.” The CCC was supposed to become a leading party body, parallel with the Central Committee, maintaining full self-dependence and independence in deciding

questions entering into its jurisdiction. Its decisions should be implemented by the Central Committee. In case disagreements arose between the CC and CCC on any question, the latter should pass them over to a higher authority — the congress — for consideration of the issue.¹

In the article, “How We Should Reorganize Rabkrin,” Lenin argued for the broadening of the rights of the Central Control Commission. In particular, he proposed that all members of the CCC would take turns in attending each session of the Politburo and checking all documents submitted for its review. This proposal was intended to revise the practice that had developed of preparing such documents exclusively by secretaries of the CC. In addition, Lenin proposed to convene united plenums of the CC and CCC once every two months, resulting in transforming them into higher party conferences. In this arrangement, the Politburo, Orgburo, and Secretariat should conduct only “routine work in the name of the CC.”²

The Central Control Commission was supposed to receive the rights of an impartial and independent party institution, defending party unity in a struggle against political intrigues that were capable of leading to a split. The creation of a highly authoritative party center, parallel to the Central Committee, in the form of the Central Control Commission, united with the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, was called upon to overcome secretiveness in the work of the Politburo and to establish control over the activity of the bureaucracy, primarily in the highest links of the party hierarchy.

One day after its completion, the article “How We Should Reorganize Rabkrin (A Proposal to the Twelfth Party Congress)” was sent to the editorial board of *Pravda*. Lenin insisted on its immediate publication, which meant that the article represented a direct appeal to the party. Bukharin, the chief editor of *Pravda*, did not dare to publish the article. Stalin supported him by referring to the necessity of discussing the article in the Politburo. Then Krupskaya asked Trotsky to arrange for the article’s immediate publication. At a joint session of the Politburo and the Orgburo, which was called hastily at Trotsky’s request, the majority of

those present initially not only opposed the reform that Lenin was proposing, but even the publication of the article. Since Lenin had resolutely demanded to see the article in printed form, Valerian Kuibyshev proposed that they print a single copy for Lenin of a special issue of *Pravda* containing the article.

Trotsky argued that Lenin's radical reform was progressive and that, even if one were opposed to it, one could not conceal Lenin's proposal from the party. The main argument in favor of publishing the article, made by the remaining participants in the session, was that Lenin would circulate the article all the same; it would be copied and read with doubled interest.

The only thing that Stalin managed to do in this situation was to significantly soften one of the most important provisions in the article:

CCC members, a certain number of whom are obliged to attend every Politburo meeting, must constitute a united group, which, "without respect of persons," must see to it that no one's authority — *neither that of the General Secretary, nor any other member of the Central Committee*, is able to impede the group from performing an inquiry, verifying documents, or generally from attaining unrestricted knowledge and the utmost correctness of matters at hand.²

In the article published in *Pravda* the day after the Politburo session, the words italicized above were removed, as they unambiguously indicated who was seen by Lenin as the main source of authoritarianism and bureaucratism.

The main reason for the anxiety over the article on the part of the majority at the Politburo meeting was that in the article, Lenin expressed publicly for the first time one of the central ideas in his "Testament": the danger of a split due to the influence of "purely personal and accidental circumstances" within the Central Committee. For this reason, the same session passed a resolution to circulate a secret letter to the party's provincial and regional committees, somewhat neutralizing those passages in the article. The letter was written by Trotsky and signed by all members of the Politburo and Orgburo present at the meeting.

In making a compromise with the other party leaders, Trotsky introduced elastic formulations into the text of the letter as a safeguard against misinterpreting Lenin's article "in a sense that the internal life of the CC has revealed in the last period some sort of deviation that is heading toward a split."⁴ The letter described how Lenin had recently been torn away from the routine work of the CC due to his illness and therefore, "the proposals included in this article were prompted not by any complications within the CC, but by Comrade Lenin's broad considerations of the difficulties that still confront the party in the upcoming historical epoch."⁵

Later, in December 1923, during the first party discussion without Lenin's participation, Timofei Sapronov, in a speech at the Khamovnik regional party conference, described the episode that had unfolded around the publication of the article, "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection." Kamenev, who was attending the conference, thereupon attempted to refute Sapronov's account by declaring:

If there are comrades who think that the Politburo consists of people who wanted to conceal some opinion of Lenin's, or who might conceal something tomorrow, then such a Politburo should be dissolved today.⁶

In order to evaluate properly the cynicism in Kamenev's declaration, let us emphasize that by this time, on the initiative of a majority in the Politburo, the publication of two of Lenin's articles had already been forbidden: "On the Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization'" and "Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission."

After the incident with the article "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," Stalin and his allies could not bring themselves to interfere with the publication of Lenin's next article, "Better Fewer, but Better," which further developed the ideas of political reform and contained two new indirect blows against Stalin.

First of all, Lenin directed extremely sharp criticism at the work done by the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection:

[Rabkrin] does not at present enjoy a shadow of authority. Everyone knows that no other institutions are worse organized than those of our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and that under present conditions, it would be absurd to ask anything of this People's Commissariat.⁷

Since Stalin headed the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection right up to the middle of 1922, Communists understood that he was the main target of Lenin's words.

Second, Lenin expressed the hope that the renovated Rabkrin and CCC would become a reliable counterweight to "our entire Soviet and Party bureaucracy."⁸

These passages, which developed the ideas on which a "Lenin-Trotsky" bloc was to be based, delivered direct blows against Stalin and the caste of party apparatchiks he headed.

Some time after the publication of Lenin's final two articles, the triumvirate began to circulate rumors that Trotsky had allegedly spoken out against Lenin's plan for reorganization of the Central Control Commission and Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. With regard to these rumors, Trotsky declared in October 1923:

More than once this question has been portrayed and is still being portrayed as a subject of disagreements between me and Comrade Lenin, whereas this question, like the national question, sheds entirely different light on groupings in the Politburo.⁹

Trotsky wrote that he did, in fact, hold a negative opinion of the old Workers' and Peasants' Inspection.

However, Comrade Lenin, in his article "Better Fewer, but Better," gave a far more devastating evaluation of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection than I ever would have dared to give. ... If one recalls who headed Rabkrin longer than anyone else, then it is not difficult to see who is the target of this characterization — as well as (Lenin's — V. R.) article on the national question.¹⁰

Having explained the history of the polemic around the issue of publishing the article, "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," Trotsky emphasized that the article later became, in the hands of those who did not wish to publish it, "something of a special

banner, with an attempt to turn it ... against me ... In place of a struggle against Comrade Lenin's plan, it was decided 'to neutralize' this plan." As a result, as Trotsky unambiguously stated, the Central Control Commission by no means assumed "the character of an independent, impartial party institution that protected and affirmed the basis of the party's authority and unity against any party or administrative excesses,"¹¹ as Lenin had insisted.

Characterizing the political atmosphere in which Lenin dictated his final articles and letters, Trotsky wrote:

Lenin keenly sensed the approach of a political crisis, and feared that the apparatus would strangle the party. The policies of Stalin became for Lenin in the last period of his life the incarnation of a rising monster of bureaucracy. The sick man must more than once have shuddered at the thought that he would not succeed in carrying out that reform of the apparatus about which he had talked with me before his second illness. A terrible danger, it seemed to him, threatened the work of his whole life.

And Stalin? Having gone too far to retreat; spurred on by his own faction; fearing that concentrated attack whose threads all issued from the sickbed of his dread enemy, Stalin was already going headlong, was openly recruiting partisans by handing out party and Soviet positions, was terrorizing those who appealed to Lenin through Krupskaya, and was more and more persistently issuing rumors that Lenin was already not responsible for his actions.¹²

Such conduct by Stalin was still conditioned by the fact that, right up until the last days of work by the ill Lenin, an ever sharpening conflict grew up between them around the so-called "Georgian incident."

1. КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 2, С. 302 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 2, p. 302].

2. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 384 [Lenin, CW, Volume 33, "How We Should Reorganize The Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," 23 January 1923, p. 482].

3. Там же, С. 387 [Ibid., p. 485].

4. Известия ЦК КПСС, 1989, № 11, С. 179 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 11, p. 179].

5. Там же, С. 180 [Ibid., p. 180].

6. Там же, С. 183 [Ibid., p. 183].

- [7.](#) Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 393 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 33, “Better Fewer, But Better,” 2 March 1923, p. 490].
- [8.](#) Там же, С. 397 [Ibid., p. 494].
- [9.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 172 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, p. 172].
- [10.](#) Там же [Ibid.]
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 172–173 [Ibid., pp. 172–173].
- [12.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 283 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, “On Lenin’s Testament,” December 31, 1932, in *The Suppressed Testament of Lenin*, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1946, p. 36].



“Derzhimorda” from Nikolai Gogol’s “Inspector General,” as depicted on a theater poster from the early 1900s.

Police administration is home to corrupt and tyrannical tsarist officials.

9. The “Georgian Incident” and the “Derzhimorda Regime”

Between the “Letter to the Congress” and the articles on the reorganization of Rabkrin, Lenin dictated a letter on the national question which troubled him no less than the question of inner-party relations. The writing of this letter, “On the Question of Nationalities, or On ‘Autonomization’” was preceded by an intense struggle between Lenin and Stalin over the ways to form the USSR, as well over the events that became known as the “Georgian Incident.”

On August 10, 1922, the Politburo instructed the Orgburo to create a commission that would prepare for the next CC plenum the question of the mutual relations between the Russian Republic and the other independent Soviet republics. By the end of August Stalin presented for the review of this commission a draft resolution on the issue in question. The draft contained Stalin’s plan for “autonomization,” that is, for the entry of Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Transcaucasian Republics into the RSFSR with the rights of autonomous republics. On 15 September, the plan was rejected by the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, which by a majority of votes called for the consolidation of all the republics into a single union “while preserving all the attributes of independence.” At a meeting of the Orgburo commission on 23 September, Stalin’s proposal was accepted as a foundation, while the resolution of the CC of the Georgian Communist Party, presented by its leader Kote Tsintsadze, was turned down.

On 22 September, Stalin sent Lenin a letter where he elucidated his draft on “autonomization” and his own understanding of “national deviationism.” In the letter Stalin noted:

Throughout four years of civil war, when we were compelled, because of foreign intervention, to demonstrate Moscow’s liberalism on the national question, we managed unwittingly to cultivate among communists a group of genuine and consistent social-independents, who demand genuine independence in every sense of the word, and interpret the interference of the Central Committee of the RKP as deception and hypocrisy on the part of Moscow.¹

Stalin considered the formation of a Union of independent republics as a mere “game” which the communists of the national republics took seriously, “stubbornly accepting words about independence at face value and also stubbornly demanding that we observe the articles of the constitutions of independent republics to the letter.”²

Having familiarized himself with this letter, on 26 September Lenin sent a letter to Kamenev intended for the members of the Politburo. From this letter it is clear: Lenin at this time was still hoping to resolve the issue about the voluntary unification of the republics into a Union without a serious fight with Stalin. Pointing out that Stalin had already agreed to make “one concession,” Lenin interpreted this concession broadly, in the spirit of recognizing a federation of independent republics; he also proposed a number of new formulations in the text of the Union treaty, opening up the possibility of “greater equality of rights.”

While introducing amendments that fundamentally changed the meaning of Stalin’s draft, Lenin nevertheless criticized Stalin only for “attempting to move too quickly”; Lenin was evidently hoping that his criticism of the proposal, expressed in a gentle way so as not to offend Stalin’s vanity, would encourage Stalin to meet his own proposals halfway. Stalin accused the leader of the Georgian Communists, Budu Mdivani, of “independence fever.” Lenin placed these words in quotation marks, thus explicitly dissociating himself from this accusation.

On 27 September, having familiarized himself with Lenin’s letter, Stalin sent Lenin and other Politburo members and candidate-members

his reply, in which he accused Lenin of “national liberalism.” On the next day, after learning from M. I. Ulyanova about Lenin’s latest thoughts on the question, Stalin and Kamenev exchanged the following remarkable notes at a session of the Politburo:

Kamenev: Ilyich was prepared to go to war in defense of independence. He proposes that I meet with the Georgians. He retracts even yesterday’s corrections. Maria Ilyichna called.

Stalin: I think we must stand firm against Ilyich. If a pair of Georgian Mensheviks are influencing Georgian Communists, and if the latter are in turn influencing Ilyich, then one must ask: of what relevance is “independence” here?

Kamenev: I think, since Vladimir Ilyich is insisting, it will make matters worse if we resist.

Stalin: I don’t know. Let him do as he sees fit.³

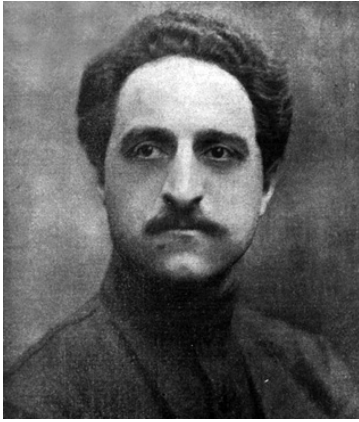
While he remained in disagreement with Lenin’s position, Stalin did not dare to enter into battle with him openly. He therefore reworked his draft in the spirit of Lenin’s understanding of the principles for the formation of a USSR. On 6 October the issue was discussed at a plenum of the Central Committee. A week before the plenum, Lenin had discussions with Ordzhonikidze, the secretary of the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee who was supporting Stalin’s line, and with the Georgian “independence advocates”: Mdivani, Okudzhava, Dumbadze, and Tsintsadze. As a result of these conversations, Lenin got an idea about the heart of the “Georgian incident.” Although he was absent at the plenum due to illness, Lenin nevertheless influenced the course of the meeting through other party leaders. Describing the events of those days, Mdivani wrote:

Stalin (without Lenin) roughed us up like a Derzhimorda⁴ figure, ridiculed us; and then, when Lenin interfered, after we met and passed on to him detailed information, the affair took on a rational, Communist character ... As for the question of our mutual relations, we agreed upon a voluntary union on the basis of equal rights for the republics, and as a result of these decisions the stifling atmosphere against us dissipated. In contrast, at the plenum of the Central Committee, the defenders of great power authority were under attack — that is what Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others said. The draft plan

was Lenin's, of course, but it was presented in the name of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and others, who immediately changed their tactics ... This group received such a slap in the face that it will not dare to emerge from the hole into which Lenin drove it anytime soon ... Yes, the atmosphere cleared a bit, but it could thicken once again.⁵

In fact, after the October Plenum of the Central Committee, the conflict between Stalin-Ordzhonikidze on the one hand, and the leaders of the Georgian Communist Party on the other, did not subside. On 19 October, the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party announced that it would petition for entry into the Union not as the Transcaucasian Federation as a whole, but as separate republics that constituted it. For this decision, Ordzhonikidze charged the "higher-ups" of the Georgian Communist Party with "an inadmissible violation of Party discipline." On the very same day, by decree of the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, Mikhail Okudzhava, was removed from his post. In response, the majority of the members of the Georgian Central Committee announced their resignation, explaining that it was impossible to work under the "Derzhimorda regime" created by Ordzhonikidze. In this spirit, a strong protest against Stalin and Ordzhonikidze was sent by the Georgian opposition to the Central Committee of the RKP(b).

On 21 October, Lenin, who thought that the conflict in the Transcaucasus had been exhausted by the decisions of the October Plenum, answered this protest with a telegram condemning the position of the Georgian Communists and proposing to send the conflict for review by the Secretariat of the CC of the RKP(b).⁶ Encouraged by this, Stalin prompted Ordzhonikidze to "urgently punish the Georgian CC." Ordzhonikidze called the leaders of the Georgian Communist Party "chauvinist rot that should be thrown out." In personal conversations he called one of his opponents "a speculator and petty shopkeeper," called another "a fool and provocateur," and threatened to shoot a third. When, in response to this abuse, one of the Georgian oppositionists, Kabakhidze, called Ordzhonikidze "Stalin's ass," Ordzhonikidze struck



Sergo Ordzhonikidze
(1886–1937)



Feliks Dzerzhinsky
(1877–1926)

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On 24 November, the Secretariat resolved to send to Georgia a commission, chaired by Dzerzhinsky, for an immediate investigation into the conflict between the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee and the Georgian Central Committee. On 25 November, the Politburo confirmed this decision, although Lenin abstained from the vote.

The Commission approved Ordzhonikidze's line and proposed to recall from Georgia the most active opponents of this line. On 12 December, Dzerzhinsky informed Lenin of the results of the commission's work. By this time, Lenin, who had received more detailed information about the events in Georgia, changed his attitude to the "Georgian incident." As he later told Fotieva, the conversation with Dzerzhinsky, and especially the account of how Ordzhonikidze had struck his adversary, had a very grave effect on him.^{[8](#)}

Feeling that Dzerzhinsky's commission had not arrived at objective conclusions in defending the wrong position of Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, Lenin decided that he must address the national question and the "Georgian affair" at the party congress. With this in

mind, he dictated an extensive letter (an article, in effect) “On the Question of Nationalities, or on ‘Autonomization,’” which, apparently, would serve as a replacement for his speech in the event that his illness prevented him from appearing at the congress. In his article, Lenin for the first time referred to his opponents — not only in the Georgian affair, but also on the national question in general — by name, having characterized their position as a manifestation of great-power chauvinism. He emphasized that a “decisive role” in the “Georgian affair” was played by the “haste and administrative zeal of Stalin, as well as his spite toward the notorious ‘social-nationalism.’ Spite in general usually plays the worst role in politics.”⁹ Lenin directly indicated that “of course Stalin and Ordzhonikidze must be held politically responsible for this campaign of truly Great-Russian nationalism” and proposed “to punish, as an example, comrade Ordzhonikidze.”¹⁰

In his article, Lenin vividly described the bureaucrat-chauvinist type, who presented the greatest threat to the resolution of the national question. He wrote:

It is quite natural that “the freedom to leave the Union”... will in the end become an essentially meaningless piece of paper, incapable of protecting the non-Russian members of the country from attacks by that truly Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, or, in essence, a scoundrel and aggressor, which, in fact, the typical Russian bureaucrat is.¹¹

Very close to these sharp characterizations is the rather transparent characterization pointing directly to Stalin:

The Georgian, who ... carelessly hurls accusations of “social-nationalism” (whereas he himself is a real and true, not only “social-nationalist,” but a vulgar Great-Russian Derzhimorda) that Georgian, essentially, is violating the interests of proletarian class solidarity ...¹²

After writing this article, Lenin continued to prepare for battle against Stalin on the national question at the Twelfth Congress. He decided that he must “finish investigating, or investigate once again, all the material of Dzerzhinsky’s commission,” in order “to correct that enormous mass of wrongs and biased judgments that it undoubtedly contains.”¹³

On 24 January, Lenin asked Stalin, through Fotieva, to hand over to him the items collected by the commission on the Georgian incident and instructed his three secretaries to study them in detail. On 1 February, the Politburo adopted a resolution about handing this material to the commission created by Lenin. In addition, on 6 February Stalin ordered Lenin's secretary to immediately give Lenin a report, "A Short Exposition of the Russian Central Committee's Letter to the Provincial and Regional Committees About the Conflict in the Georgian Communist Party." This report provided information about the resolution passed by the Politburo during Lenin's illness approving the conclusions of Dzerzhinsky's commission and ordering the re-call from Georgia of four leaders of the Georgian opposition.

After receiving all these items, Lenin dictated to Fotieva a list of questions requiring particular attention in preparing information for him: 1) Why was the former Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party accused of deviationism and a breach of Party discipline? 2) Why was the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee accused of suppressing the Georgian Central Committee? 3) Did the Dzerzhinsky Commission examine only the accusations against the Georgian Central Committee or also the accusations against the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee (including the "bio-mechanical incident" — that is, Ordzhonikidze's use of physical punishment against his opponent)? 4) What was the line of the Russian Central Committee in Lenin's absence?¹⁴

On 14 February, Lenin gave instructions to Fotieva "to hint to Solts (a member of the Presidium of the Control Commission of the RKP(b), which was entrusted with examining the "Georgian incident" – V. R.) that he [Lenin] was on the side of the offended party. Let someone among the offended know that he is on their side." Among the same instructions Lenin posed the question, "Did Stalin know (presumably, of Ordzhonikidze's act – V. R.)? Why did he not react?" He also formulated his main thought: "The name 'deviationist,' applied for deviation toward chauvinism and Menshevism (Stalin's and Ordzhonikidze's favorite accusations against the old Georgian Communist Party – V. R.) proves

that the supporters of great power themselves are guilty of that very deviation.”¹⁵

Judging from Fotieva’s memoirs on the work of the Lenin commission, it is clear that the commission ran up against bureaucratic intrigues surrounding the “Georgian incident.” Thus, Solts reported to Fotieva that the statement by Kabakhidze to the Central Control Commission had disappeared, but that this circumstance was not important since the Central Control Commission possessed “an objective account” by Aleksei Rykov, who was present during the incident. In his “objective account,” Rykov stressed that “comrade Ordzhonikidze was correct to interpret the reproaches directed at him by comrade Kabakhidze as a serious personal insult.”¹⁶

On 3 March, Fotieva passed on to Lenin the conclusion of the commission he had mandated under the title, “A Concise Account of the Conflict in the Georgian Communist Party.” Having familiarized himself with this document and feeling that, because of his health, he would hardly be able to take part in the work of the Twelfth Congress, Lenin informed Fotieva that he now regarded the article “On the Question of Nationalities, or on ‘Autonomization,’” (which he prepared for the Congress) as an editorial that he intended to publish, only somewhat later. On 5 March he instructed Volodicheva to send this article to Trotsky along with two notes. The first note included the following text, dictated by Lenin:

Respected Comrade Trotsky!

I would very much like to request that you undertake the defense of the Georgian case before the Central Committee of the party. This matter is now being “prosecuted” by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, and I cannot rely on their impartiality. Even quite the contrary. If you would agree to take up its defense yourself, then I would be able to rest assured. If, for some reason, you do not agree, then return the entire matter to me. I will consider that a sign of your unwillingness.

With the very best comradely greetings, Lenin¹⁷

The second note, written by Volodicheva, contained the information:

Vladimir Ilyich has asked me to add for your information that Comrade Kamenev is traveling to Georgia on Wednesday (to the Georgian Party Congress – V. R.)¹⁸ and Vladimir Ilyich would like to know if you wish to send anything there from yourself.¹⁹

Having read the article and two notes, Trotsky asked: “Why has the question become so strained?” Lenin’s secretaries informed him about the conclusions drawn by Lenin as a result of studying the material from the “Georgian incident.” These conclusions, in their words, amounted to the following:

Stalin had again betrayed Lenin’s trust: in order to secure for himself a firm position in Georgia, Stalin had carried out there, behind the back of Lenin and the entire Central Committee, with the help of Ordzhonikidze and not without the support of Dzerzhinsky, an organized coup against the best section of the Party; moreover, he deceitfully concealed himself beneath the authority of the Central Committee.²⁰

The secretaries also indicated that Lenin was extremely worried by Stalin’s preparation of the upcoming Party Congress, especially in connection with his factional machinations in Georgia.

“Lenin’s intention,” Trotsky recalled, “now became completely clear to me. Using Stalin’s policy as an example, he wished to expose to the Party, and ruthlessly, the danger of a bureaucratic degeneration of the dictatorship.”²¹ Subsequently, Trotsky explained Lenin’s persistent attention to the “Georgian affair” by the fact that “on the national question, where Lenin demanded particular flexibility, the fangs of imperial centralism showed themselves ever more openly.”²²

Trotsky told Lenin through his secretaries that right now, it would be complicated for him to fulfill Lenin’s request because he was confined to his bed and was not familiar with the documents around the “Georgian incident.” After asking him to send these documents, Trotsky also expressed the desire to discuss with Lenin the questions raised in the article about reorganizing Rabkrin (if the physicians would allow Lenin to have such a discussion). In addition, Trotsky asked to find out from Lenin if he could acquaint Kamenev with the manuscripts sent to him in order to induce him to act in Georgia in Lenin’s spirit.

Fifteen minutes later, Fotieva returned from Lenin with a negative response:

“Under no circumstances!”

“Why?”

“Vladimir Ilyich said, ‘Kamenev will show Stalin immediately, and then Stalin will conclude a rotten compromise and deceive us.’”

“In other words, the affair has reached such a point that Ilyich no longer considers it possible to reach a compromise with Stalin, even on a correct policy?”

“Yes, Ilyich does not trust Stalin, and wishes to oppose him openly before the entire Party. He is preparing a bomb.”²³

Roughly an hour after this conversation, Fotieva visited Trotsky again and gave him a copy of a note from Lenin, addressed to Mdivani and Makharadze, the main opponents of Stalin’s policy in Georgia:

Respected comrades!

I am following your affair with all my soul. I am indignant over the rudeness of Ordzhonikidze and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech.²⁴

Because the copied version of the note was addressed not only to Trotsky, but also to Kamenev, Trotsky asked for an explanation of Lenin’s latest decision. Fotieva replied:

His condition is worsening from hour to hour ... Ilyich now speaks with difficulty. ... The Georgian question worries him enormously; he is afraid that he will collapse before he has managed to undertake any measures. When passing on the note, he said, “Before it’s too late I will have to appear openly, and earlier than I had intended.”²⁵

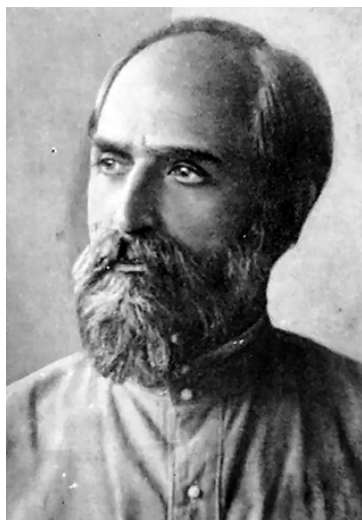
On the same day, Trotsky invited Kamenev over and acquainted him with Lenin’s article and notes. Later, Trotsky made a copy of the article for himself and returned its original to Lenin’s secretaries.

Trotsky used Lenin’s ideas as the basis for his corrections of Stalin’s theses, “National Aspects in Party and State Construction,” prepared for the Twelfth Congress, and for his own article on the national question.

On 6 March, Trotsky sent members of the Politburo his extensive



Budu Mdivani
(1886–1937)



Filipp Makharadze
(1868–1941)

remarks on Stalin's theses. In these theses, there was no indication of the special danger of great-power chauvinism, but the main accent was placed on the danger of "petty-bourgeois," "Menshevik" deviations in the provinces, and of a deviation toward "national liberalism" in the center (let us recall that in September 1922, Stalin accused Lenin of the latter "deviation"). In his comments on the theses, Trotsky proposed to remove the categorical assertion contained in them that a correct resolution of the national question in the USSR had already been achieved. He also suggested indicating that the deviation on the part of the "nationals" was — both historically and politically — a reaction to the great-power deviation and chauvinistic tendencies in the party and state apparatus, which needed to be rebuffed. Finally, Trotsky proposed indicating that the decision about creating united (Union) People's Commissariats was not final. Such a unification was:

... An exam for the Soviet apparatus: if this experiment receives in practice a great-power orientation, then the party would have to introduce a proposal at

the next Congress of Soviets to break up the union commissariats into republican ones, going so far as to re-educate the Soviet apparatus in the spirit of a genuinely proletarian attitude to the needs and demands of smaller and more backward nations.²⁶

Stalin accepted some of these corrections. In his revised theses, taking into account the amendments and published on 24 March in *Pravda*, the danger of a great-power deviation was moved to the forefront.

A few days before this, Trotsky published an article in *Pravda* in which he warned against illusions that the conquest of power by the working class signifies the automatic resolution of the national question. While not naming Stalin by name, but clearly having him in mind, he condemned attempts to classify “the raising of the importance of the national question in the revolution” as Menshevism or liberalism. He also stressed that the emergence of chauvinist tendencies among non-Russian communists was “payment for great-power strivings in the state apparatus and even parochial views among party leaders.”²⁷ As far as the “Georgian conflict” was directly concerned, Trotsky continued the battle for its resolution in Lenin’s spirit at a session of the Politburo on 26 March, where this conflict was discussed once again.

Trotsky proposed to recall Ordzhonikidze from his post as secretary of the Transcaucasian Territorial Committee, but this proposal was rejected by a majority of votes. After familiarizing himself with the transcript of the Politburo meeting, in which only this proposal of his was mentioned, Trotsky sent a note to the Secretariat in which he demanded the inclusion in the transcript of his other two proposals that had also been rejected at this meeting:

- 1) To state that the Transcaucasian Federation in its present form represents a distortion of the Soviet idea of a federation in the sense of extreme centralism;
- 2) To acknowledge that the comrades representing a minority in the Georgian Communist Party do not represent a “deviation” from the party line on the national question; their policy in this question possesses a defensive character — against the incorrect policy of comrade Ordzhonikidze.²⁸

Finally, Trotsky made an attempt to persuade Bukharin to enter the battle for Lenin’s ideas on the national question. In a letter to Bukharin

on 1 April, Trotsky wrote:

It seems to me that you should write an article on the national question before the party congress, and not a cursory, but a substantial article. Your particular position on this question in the past is, of course, already known.²⁹ It is all the more important now to demonstrate full unanimity on this question — not as a demonstration of semi-official well-being, but in the sense that the basic core of the party will carry out a unanimous and uncompromising struggle against any deception on this question.³⁰

As we will see later, at the Twelfth Congress Bukharin was one of those who consistently defended the ideas of Lenin's article.

In this way, Trotsky did a great deal in order to make Lenin's ideas known to the party and then be implemented. At the same time, he did not raise the question of publishing the article, as long as "there remained even a glimmer of hope that Vladimir Ilyich had managed to make some kind of arrangements for the article with regard to the Party Congress, for which ... the article was intended."³¹

The situation changed drastically on 16 April, a day before the opening of the Twelfth Congress, when Fotieva sent to the Politburo the article, "On the Question of Nationalities, or On 'Autonomization,'" the original of which, on Lenin's orders, was kept in his secret archive. In addition, Fotieva stated in letters to Stalin, Kamenev, and Trotsky that Lenin had prepared this article for the Twelfth Congress, where he intended to speak on the national question.

Having received this letter from Fotieva, Trotsky sent to the Secretariat of the Central Committee copies that he had of Lenin's article and notes on the national question, proposing that members of the CC acquaint themselves with them. As Stalin sent these documents to the CC members, he accompanied them with a letter in which he accused Trotsky of concealing them from the Politburo and Central Committee. In response, Trotsky sent CC members a letter in which he stated that these documents had been sent to him by Lenin on a personal and secret basis. At the same time, he directed a letter to Stalin in which he demanded a review of Stalin's charges by a conflict commission at the congress if Stalin did not immediately send CC members "a statement

that would exclude any possibility of any ambiguity whatsoever on this question.” “You, better than anyone else, can judge,” Trotsky wrote at the end of the letter, “that if I had not done this until now, then it is by no means because it could be harmful to my interests.”³²

After this letter, Stalin withdrew his charges against Trotsky. However, the very fact that Stalin had sparked a row over this question was apparently one of the reasons why Trotsky did not show the necessary resoluteness in supporting the Georgian opposition at the Congress, as Lenin had asked. At the plenary session that discussed the national question, Trotsky was absent, since he was occupied in making changes to the resolution on the report he had given on industry; at the session of the section devoted to the national question, he limited himself to a relatively neutral speech.

At a session on 18 April, the Presidium of the Twelfth Congress stated that “the note by Comrade Lenin on the national question became known to the CC only on the eve of the Congress, completely independently of the will of any member of the CC, and only in connection with directives given by Comrade Lenin and with the course of his illness.”³³ For this reason, the spreading of any rumors about delaying the disclosure of this note was considered a slander. At the same time, a resolution was adopted: to read aloud Lenin’s notes on the national question, as well as all material related to it, at a session of a “Council of Elders.”³⁴ Following the meeting of the “Council of Elders,” the members of the Presidium would divulge these materials before delegations of the Congress; the materials were not to be mentioned, however, at the section of the Congress on the national question.

At the session of the “Council of Elders,” it was stated, “as something that goes without saying,” that Lenin’s article should be published, perhaps, as some have proposed, only after removing “the excessively sharp personal moments.”³⁵ Nevertheless, the “Council of Elders” confirmed the decision of the Presidium to prohibit Lenin’s documents from being read aloud either at plenary meetings or at the section on the national question. As a result, the Georgian oppositionists were denied

the right even to make references to these documents. When Mdivani in his speech attempted to quote individual points from Lenin's article, Kamenev, who was chairing the Congress, rudely interrupted him.

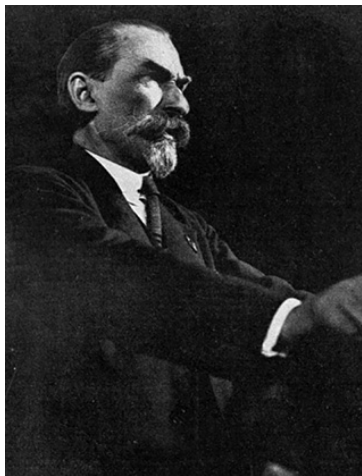
The speeches of a number of delegates, however, contained references to Lenin's article (called "The Letter"). At a session of the section on the national question, Rakovsky quoted from Lenin's article, and at a plenary session of the Congress openly said that, if Lenin were at the Congress, then he would show the party that "on the national question, it is making fatal mistakes." He would also argue that the national question is one of those questions that "promises civil war if we do not display the necessary sensitivity and the necessary understanding toward it."³⁶

Rakovsky emphasized that, along with the growth of national self-consciousness, there was a growth in "a feeling of equality, which comrade Ilyich addressed in his letter — a feeling of equality which, among the nationalities who have been oppressed by the Tsarist regime for hundreds of years, has penetrated much deeper and stronger than we think." Saying that "our Union-building has followed an incorrect path," Rakovsky stressed that "this opinion is not just mine, it is the opinion of Vladimir Ilyich." He pointed to the need to fight manifestations "of the great-power feelings of the Russian man who never has known national oppression, but, on the contrary, oppressed others for hundreds of years." Referring to dozens of decrees by central bodies, claiming to have at their disposal "the wealth of all the republics," Rakovsky proposed to "take away from the Union commissars nine-tenths of their rights and give them to the national republics."³⁷

Skrypnyk stressed that the national question was wider than the disagreements "among the Georgian section of our party," to which the discussion of this question at the Congress had been reduced. He openly declared that in Stalin's theses, nothing new was proposed at a time when "we are practically marking time on the national question, and remain helpless, even given the correct and principled resolution of it." Skrypnyk stated that "great-power prejudices, imbibed with mother's milk, have become instinctive for many and many comrades," who "always try to



Khristian Rakovsky
(1873–1941)



Nikolai Skrypnik
(1872–1933)

disqualify every mention of great-power chauvinism ... with a counter-claim: they say, ‘first overcome your own nationalism.’ Such ‘principled great-power advocates, such purer-than-pure Russians,’ are distorting the party line in practice. Meanwhile, when it comes to Great-Russian chauvinism, no fight has been waged among us. An end must be put to this.”^{[38](#)}

A rather full account of the content of Lenin’s articles was given by Bukharin, who directly posed the question:

Why did Comrade Lenin, with such furious energy, begin to sound the alarm over the Georgian question? And why did Comrade Lenin say not a word in his letter about the mistakes of the deviationists but, on the contrary, directed all his words, and grand ones at that, against the policy now being conducted against the deviationists? ... Because Comrade Lenin is a brilliant strategist and knows that one must strike the main enemy, and not eclectically thread subtleties together.

Meanwhile, as Bukharin noted, in the reports given by Zinoviev and Stalin, and in many speeches during the discussion, emphasis was shifted to criticism of provincial chauvinism, Georgian included.

But when the topic was Russian chauvinism, then only the tip seemed to protrude (applause, laughter), and *this is the most dangerous*.

“If Comrade Lenin were here,” Bukharin concluded unambiguously, “he would give such a drubbing to the Russian chauvinists, that they would remember it ten times over.”³⁹

Recalling that Lenin’s sharp speech at the Eighth Conference of the RKP(b) had not been published, and for some reason ended up lost, Yakovlev declared:

I fear lest there be another lost document (voices: “That’s right!”). Would we be discussing here, at the congress, the national question the way that it is being discussed now, if there were no letters from Lenin? No. I think that the one main guarantee that there will not be a new lost document here, but instead will be a number of practical steps, is the widest distribution in the party of the ideas and thoughts that are developed in the letters of Comrade Lenin. Because these are the kind of documents that will force every party member to think hard, in what manner does despicable great-power Russian chauvinism permeate his apparatus.⁴⁰

Thus, a number of delegates, including those who were not Trotsky’s supporters, essentially made — directly or indirectly — a serious criticism of Stalin. Therefore, the latter had to display no small amount of guile in order to diminish the impression made by these speeches. In his concluding words, Stalin declared that “one group of comrades, headed by Bukharin and Rakovsky, inflated too much the significance of the national question” and that “at our congress there are many comrades who haphazardly cite Comrade Lenin, distorting him.”⁴¹ Having mentioned that “very many here have referred to the notes and articles of Vladimir Ilyich,” Stalin moved away from discussion of these documents by uttering the self-righteous and evasive words: “I would not like to cite my teacher, Comrade Lenin, since he is not here, and I fear that, perhaps, I might refer to him incorrectly and out of place.”⁴²

In his actual report, Stalin in fact disavowed Lenin’s position regarding Mdivani’s group by declaring that “this was a small cluster that was time and again thrown out in Georgia itself.”⁴³ At the section on the national question, he hinted that Lenin’s support for this group is explained by the

fact that “Lenin forgot. He was forgetting a lot in the recent period. He forgot that we accepted the foundations of the Union together.”⁴⁴

Stalin spoke on this topic even more cynically three years later, when Trotsky recalled his major mistake on the national question at a session of an ECCI plenum. Using the fact that the majority of the participants at the plenum had no knowledge of Lenin’s documents, Stalin qualified Trotsky’s words as “gossip,” and declared that, in reality, only an “insignificant incident” had taken place at a time when Lenin “was ill, lying in bed, without the opportunity to follow events.” Therefore, he could not know the facts that supposedly showed that “so-called ‘deviationists,’ people like Mdivani, deserved, in fact, to be treated much more severely than I, as one of the secretaries of the Central Committee of our party, treated them.”⁴⁵

After the Twelfth Congress Lenin’s article circulated in hand-written copies among party members and even found its way abroad, where it was published on 17 December 1923 in the Menshevik émigré journal, *Socialist Herald*. Nonetheless, the ban on its publication in the USSR was not lifted right up until 1956.

1. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 9, С. 199 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 9, “Letter of I. V. Stalin to V. I. Lenin,” 22 September 1922, p. 199].

2. Там же [Ibid.].

3. Там же, С. 208–209 [Ibid., pp. 208–209].

4. Derzhimorda—a brutal policeman in Gogol’s *Inspector-General*, becoming a symbol for any crude, insolent oppressor or tyrant. – Translator.

5. *Коммунист*, 1989, № 3, С. 82 [*Communist*, 1989, № 3, p. 82].

6. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 54, С. 299–300 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 45, “Telegram to K. M. Tsintsadze and S. I. Kavtaradze,” 21 October 1922, p. 582].

7. *Коммунист*, 1989, № 3, С. 82; *Правда*, 12 августа 1988 [*Communist*, 1989, № 3, p. 82; *Pravda*, 12 August 1988].

8. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 476 [Lenin, *PSS*, Volume 45, “Diary of the Secretaries Attending Lenin,” 30 January 1923, p. 476].

9. Там же, С. 357 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 36, “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomization,’” 30 December 1922, p. 606].

- [10.](#) Там же, С. 361 [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomization’ (Continuation of Notes),” 31 December 1922, p. 610].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 357 [Ibid., 30 December 1922, p. 606].
- [12.](#) Там же, С. 360 [Ibid., 31 December 1922, p. 608].
- [13.](#) Там же, С. 361 [Ibid., p. 610].
- [14.](#) Там же, С. 478, 486, 607 [Ibid., p. 478, 486, 607].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 607 [Ibid., p. 607].
- [16.](#) Дубинский-Мухадзе, И., *Орджоникидзе*, М., 1967, С. 270 [I. Dubinsky-Mukhadze, *Ordzhonikidze*, Moscow, 1967, p. 270].
- [17.](#) Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 54, С. 329 [Lenin, CW, Volume 45, “To L. D. Trotsky,” 5 March 1923, p. 607].
- [18.](#) Kamenev was sent to Georgia along with Kuibyshev to participate in the work of the Congress of the Georgian Communist Party and to verify the conclusions made by the Dzerzhinsky commission.
- [19.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 148 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “M. A. Volodicheva to L. D. Trotsky,” 5 March 1923, p. 148].
- [20.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 459 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 483].
- [21.](#) Там же, С. 460 [Ibid., p. 484].
- [22.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 283 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, “On Lenin’s Testament,” *The New Internationalist*, 1934, p. 36].
- [23.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 460 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 484].
- [24.](#) Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 54, С. 330 [Lenin, CW, Volume 45, “To P. G. Mdivani, F. Y. Makharadze and others,” 6 March 1923, p. 608].
- [25.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 460 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 485].
- [26.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 5, С. 154 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 5, “From the History of the Formation of the USSR,” p. 154].
- [27.](#) Троцкий, Л. «Мысли о партии. II. Национальный вопрос и воспитание партийной молодежи», *Правда*, 20 марта 1923. Идеи этой статьи были развиты в статье Троцкого, «Мысли о партии. Еще раз: воспитание молодежи и национальный вопрос», *Правда*, 1 мая 1923 [Trotsky, “Thoughts on the Party. II. The National Question and Education of the Party Youth,” *Pravda*, 20 March 1923. The ideas of this article were developed in Trotsky’s article, “Thoughts on the Party. Once Again: Education of the Youth and the National Question,” *Pravda*, 1 May 1923].
- [28.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 154 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “L. D. Trotsky to the Secretariat of the CC VKP(b),” 28 March 1923, p. 154].
- [29.](#) For a number of years, Bukharin rejected the right of nations to self-determination.
- [30.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 155 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “L. D. Trotsky to N. I. Bukharin,” 1 April 1923, p. 155].

- [31.](#) Там же, С. 158, [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “L. D. Trotsky to All Members of the CC RKP(b),” 16 April 1923, p. 158].
- [32.](#) Там же, С. 161 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “L. D. Trotsky to I. V. Stalin,” 18 April 1923, p. 161].
- [33.](#) Там же, С. 162 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “Excerpt from Transcript № 2 of the Session of the Presidium of the Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b),” 18 April 1923, p. 162].
- [34.](#) In order to facilitate its maneuvers during the work of the Congress, the triumvirate was able to establish (for the first time in the history of the party) a special body: a “Seigneuren Convent,” or “Council of Elders,” which was made up of representatives from the delegations (one representative for every ten delegates). In effect, a second, “lower congress” was created, formed chiefly of senior bureaucrats and called upon to “regulate” the course of work at the official congress.]
- [35.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 172 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, “Letter from L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and CCC,” 23 October 1923, p. 172].
- [36.](#) *Двенадцатый съезд РКП(б)*. Стенографический отчет, М., 1968, С. 576 [*Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b)*. Stenographic Record, M., 1968, p. 576].
- [37.](#) Там же, С. 579, 582 [*Ibid.*, pp. 579, 582].
- [38.](#) Там же, С. 569–573 [*Ibid.*, pp. 569–573].
- [39.](#) Там же, С. 614–615 [*Ibid.*, pp. 614–615].
- [40.](#) Там же, С. 596 [*Ibid.*, p. 596].
- [41.](#) Там же, С. 649, 652 [*Ibid.*, pp. 649, 652].
- [42.](#) Там же, С. 650 [*Ibid.*, p. 650].
- [43.](#) Там же, С. 491 [*Ibid.*, p. 491].
- [44.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 171 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, “Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b). Transcript of the Session of the Congress’ Section on the National Question,” 25 April 1923, p. 171].
- [45.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 9, С. 65–66 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 9, “Reply to the Discussion,” 13 December 1926, pp. 68–69].



Khristian Rakovsky, Budu Mdivani, Yan Rudzutak, Aleksandr Bekzadyan in 1922 at Genoa. All four would be shot on Stalin's orders between 1937 and 1941.

10. Fateful Days

During the months in which Lenin worked on his final articles, highly dramatic events were unfolding inside the Politburo. The Twelfth Party Congress was approaching. On 11 January, the Politburo confirmed that Lenin would deliver the political report from the Central Committee to the Congress. It soon became clear, however, that the state of Lenin's health left little hope for his participation in the work of the Congress. The question arose: who should be selected to deliver the main political report?

At the Politburo meeting on this question, Stalin declared: "Trotsky, of course." Kalinin, Rykov, and Kamenev all supported him (Zinoviev was on leave in the Caucasus at the time). Trotsky himself opposed the proposal on the grounds, he said, that the party would feel uneasy if someone attempted personally to replace the ailing Lenin. He proposed instead to conduct the Congress without an introductory political report; moreover, he suggested that individual Politburo members deliver reports devoted to basic points on the agenda. Trotsky added that his refusal was connected to the fact that he had differences with the majority of the Politburo on economic questions. "What differences?" Stalin replied. Kalinin added, "On nearly all questions before the Politburo, your decisions are always accepted."¹

Trotsky later recalled:

Stalin knew that a threat was headed his way from Lenin, and tried to court me from all directions. He repeated that the political report should be made by the second most influential and popular member of the Central

Committee after Lenin, that is, Trotsky, and the Party expected and would understand nothing else. In his attempts at feigned friendliness, Stalin seemed even more alien to me than when he exhibited outright hostility, especially since his real motives were all too obvious.²

On 6 January, several days prior to the discussion over the political report, Stalin had proposed in a letter to the Central Committee “to appoint Comrade Trotsky Deputy Chair of Sovnarkom” (as Lenin had proposed), having made VSNKh [Supreme Council of the National Economy] his special concern. He added that such an appointment “might facilitate our work in liquidating the chaos (in the sphere of government administration – V. R.).”³

The situation changed after the return of Zinoviev, who began to demand that he deliver the main political report at the Congress. The idea that Zinoviev might be presented at the Congress as Lenin’s successor now lay at the heart of the factional activity of the “triumvirate.” Secret meetings, which at that time involved still only a small group, now began to take place incessantly behind Trotsky’s back. After such meetings, Kamenev turned to his trustworthy colleagues in the party leadership with the question, “Are we really going to allow Trotsky to become the sole leader of the Party and the government?”⁴ In this way, the “triumvirate” for the first time sowed the myth (at first among its closest supporters) — the myth which still persists today — that Trotsky aspired to a personal dictatorship. Then for the first time — and again at first in a surreptitious fashion — the triumvirate and their stooges began to rake over the past, preparing their most fundamental myth — about “Trotskyism.” By the beginning of 1923, crude and anonymous leaflets against Trotsky began to be circulated illegally among party members. According to the Menshevik Valentinov, who was in the USSR at that time:

One such leaflet gathered all the caustic and rude remarks ever written by Lenin about Trotsky, and another attempted to prove that Trotsky was in essence a Menshevik and had only recently declared himself a Bolshevik.⁵

In the heat of the “troika’s” factional struggle against Trotsky (and, in fact, against the ailing Lenin as well), there occurred an extraordinarily

significant episode, which was described for the first time by Trotsky in his article, “The Super-Borgia in the Kremlin.” It follows from this article that at a Politburo meeting in either February or at the beginning of March, Stalin reported that Lenin had recently asked him for poison. According to Stalin, Lenin justified his request by his fear that, in the event of another stroke, he might be deprived of speech and become an invalid. In such a case, Lenin considered the best option to be suicide.

From Krupskaya’s memoirs, it is known that Lenin approved of the action taken by the Lafargue couple, who preferred to take their own lives voluntarily rather than live as invalids. “Ilyich said, ‘if one can no longer work for the Party, then one must be able to look truth in the eye and die like the Lafargues.’”⁶



Mariya Ulyanova and Nikolai Bukharin

In 1926, during the July Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, the leaders of the Left Opposition demanded the fulfillment of Lenin’s advice to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary. In justifying that demand, they recalled numerous facts reflecting Lenin’s extremely negative attitude toward Stalin during the last months of his life. M. I. Ulyanova then addressed

the plenum with a statement. In it, she asserted that Lenin trusted Stalin highly to the end of his days; evidence of this, in particular, was the fact that Lenin appealed to Stalin with the kind of request that could be made only to a genuine revolutionary. Ulyanova had in mind Lenin's request for poison, which she did not explicitly indicate in her letter.

Ulyanova wrote her statement at the instigation of Bukharin and Stalin, who intended to disavow the claims of the Opposition leaders. In 1989, a photocopy of the draft for Ulyanova's statement was published, written in Bukharin's hand. In this document Bukharin wrote (on behalf of Ulyanova):

In view of the systematic attacks on Comrade Stalin by the oppositionist minority and the incessant allegations that Lenin has nearly broken completely with Stalin, I consider it my duty to say a few words about Lenin's relationship to Stalin, since I was with Lenin during the final months of his life. Vladimir Ilyich thought very highly of Stalin; so highly, in fact, that at the time of his first stroke, and at the time of his second stroke, Vladimir Ilyich appealed to Stalin with the most intimate of instructions, emphasizing all the while that he was appealing specifically to Stalin ... In general, during the most difficult moments of his illness, Vladimir Ilyich did not ask to see a single member of the Central Committee and did not wish to see anyone else, summoning only Stalin.⁷ Therefore, speculation that V. I. held Stalin in lower regard than others is directly refuted by the truth.⁸

By now, the memoirs of Ulyanova and Fotieva that have been published enable us to view the facts surrounding Lenin's request more clearly; these facts were not as well known to Trotsky, who considered it possible that the version of Lenin's request could have been invented by Stalin.

In her notes on Lenin's illness, Ulyanova wrote that as early as the winter of 1921–1922, when the first symptoms of Lenin's illness appeared — headaches and the loss of the ability to work — Lenin, fearing the onset of paralysis, after which he felt his further existence would be pointless, asked Stalin to provide him with poison. “Stalin promised Vladimir Ilyich to fulfill his request, should it become necessary.”⁹ Lenin turned to Stalin with the same request about poison several days after his first stroke, which occurred on 25 May 1922. For this purpose he invited

Stalin to visit Gorki; Stalin traveled there along with Bukharin. Immediately following his face-to-face exchange with Lenin, Stalin reported to Bukharin and Ulyanova Lenin's request to fulfill his earlier promise "to help him exit the stage" if he ended up paralyzed. Bukharin and Ulyanova suggested to Stalin that he return to Lenin and say that he had discussed the situation with the doctors, who assured him that Lenin's condition was not at all hopeless and that his illness was curable. Therefore it was necessary to wait before fulfilling Lenin's request. Stalin told Lenin that he would fulfill the request when no real hope for improving his condition remained.¹⁰ Ulyanova later referred to Fotieva's diary entry, that, at the end of December 1922, Lenin had asked her, in the event that paralysis should deprive him of speech, to take all measures to procure cyanide, which he called "a means which is humanitarian and following the example of the Lafargues." Lenin also asked that his request be kept in absolute secrecy.¹¹

In 1967, Fotieva told the writer Aleksandr Bek that in December 1922, Lenin sent her to Stalin for poison. According to Fotieva, Stalin did not give her any poison.

Thus it follows from the memoirs of Ulyanova and Fotieva, first, that Lenin's request was known to a larger circle of persons than Trotsky presumed; second, that Lenin asked Stalin for poison at least three times: at the end of 1921, during the summer of 1922 and in December 1922. Moreover, each of these requests became known to people close to Lenin. Neither Ulyanova, nor Fotieva, however, ever indicated that Lenin appealed to Stalin with such a request in February 1923, when Stalin reported it for the first time to the other members of the Politburo. There is no evidence that Stalin even met with Lenin during this period.



Lenin and his sister, Mariya Ulyanova in Gorki

Trotsky knew of only two facts: that Stalin had reported Lenin's request, to which report Trotsky himself had been a witness, and Ulyanova's official letter to the July 1926 Plenum. Reflecting on these facts, Trotsky concluded that Lenin saw in Stalin the only person capable of fulfilling the tragic request, insofar as among those closest to Lenin only Stalin was interested in fulfilling Lenin's desire; no one else except Stalin would have done Lenin such a "service."¹²

Trotsky's hypothesis is corroborated by still another note of Ulyanova's which was not intended for publication. In this note Ulyanova attempted to reconsider (for herself) those facts that were recounted in her statement from 1926. In that statement, Ulyanova wrote, she "did not state the entire truth regarding Lenin's attitude toward Stalin"; moreover,

she also noted that in actual fact, in spite of his increasingly negative attitude toward Stalin, Lenin had several times appealed to him for poison since “there was no one else other than Stalin to whom Lenin could make such a request.”¹³

Having considered the facts reported by Ulyanova, Fotieva, and Trotsky, one can draw the following conclusions. Aware that Lenin’s request was known not only to him alone, Stalin had to presume that in the event of Lenin’s death there would naturally arise suspicion that he had hastened it. Stalin’s fear in this regard, it seems, explains his decision to inform the Politburo of Lenin’s request, supposedly delivered to Stalin during Lenin’s final days, and which might elicit the Politburo’s agreement in giving Lenin the poison. All those attending the Politburo meeting, however, declared to Stalin that there could be no consideration of giving poison to Lenin.

Stalin certainly must have concluded at that time that Lenin’s return to active political life would have meant for him, the General Secretary, political death. As A. Avtorkhanov correctly asserts:

Had Lenin remained alive even for several more months, Stalin would have ceased to exist politically. In that case, Lenin’s decision would have been final and, as always, preemptory. Stalin knew this better than the others.¹⁴

The correctness of this perspective is clearly confirmed by Lenin’s persistent attention in February and March to the investigation of the “Georgian incident” and to Stalin’s role in it.

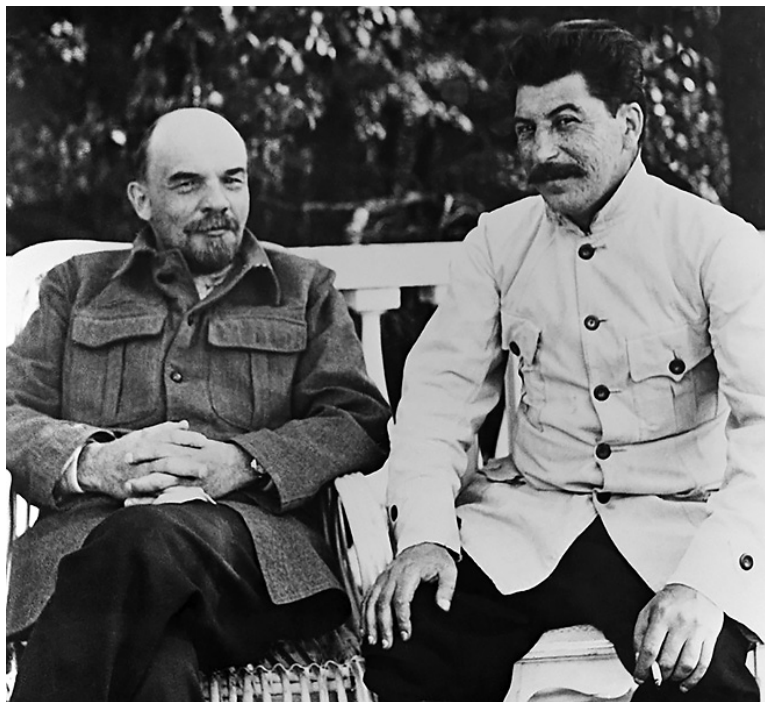
Undoubtedly experiencing a certain degree of confusion during this time, Stalin resorted to a hypocritical maneuver aimed at lessening Lenin’s negative attitude toward him. He invited Ulyanova into his office and with an extremely pained expression declared to her:

What does Ilyich take me for! What an attitude he has toward me! He seems to regard me as some sort of traitor! Yet I love him with all my soul! Tell him that somehow.¹⁵

Later, Ulyanova recalled that during this particular exchange she felt sorry for Stalin, who seemed genuinely distressed to her. In one of her conversations with Lenin not long after the exchange with Stalin, she told

Lenin in passing that his comrades sent their greetings. “Ah,” Lenin objected.

“And Stalin asked me to send you his warmest greetings and to tell you how much he loves you.” Lenin smiled but said nothing. “Well,” I asked, ‘shall I give him your regards?’ “Give him my regards,” Lenin answered rather coldly. “But Volodya,” I continued, “he is intelligent all the same, Stalin, that is.”¹⁶ “He’s not intelligent at all,” Lenin answered firmly and winced.¹⁷



Lenin and Stalin in Gorki in 1922

From this record it is clear, first of all, that Lenin at that time doubted the sincerity of the attitude toward him of several of his closest comrades, primarily Stalin. Second, it is clear that by that time, Lenin had a clearly developed opinion not only of Stalin’s moral, but also of his intellectual qualities. Ulyanova later recalled:

No matter how irritated Lenin felt with Stalin, there is one thing I can say with full certainty. His words that “Stalin is not intelligent at all” were expressed without any irritation whatsoever. This was his opinion of Stalin, fully formed and well defined, which he then submitted to me.¹⁸

On 5 March there occurred another event that further strained the relations between Lenin and Stalin. On that day Lenin learned of the incident that had occurred several months earlier between Stalin and Krupskaya. As Krupskaya’s secretary V. Drizdo described, recalling the words of Krupskaya, the incident unfolded in the following fashion. Once, during a conversation with Lenin, Krupskaya had to leave the room to answer a telephone call. When she returned, Lenin asked, “Who called?” “It was Stalin,” Krupskaya answered, “...we made up.” “What do you mean?” Krupskaya’s words had blurted out inadvertently. She then had to explain to Lenin what had happened between her and Stalin in December of the preceding year.¹⁹

The heart of this incident is the following. On 21 December, Krupskaya had sent Trotsky, with the approval of Professor Foerster, a letter dictated by Lenin, in which he proposed to raise the question of the monopoly on foreign trade at the Twelfth Party Congress and at a faction of the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Acting out of party loyalty, immediately after receiving the letter Trotsky reported its contents by telephone to Kamenev. Kamenev in turn sent a letter to Stalin, in which he disclosed the essence of this conversation. Kamenev wrote:

Trotsky did not express his own opinion, but requested that the question be passed on to the commission of the Central Committee in charge of conducting the Congress. I promised that I would pass this on to you, which I am now doing.²⁰

On the same day Stalin wrote a reply to Kamenev in which he expressed his dissatisfaction with “how the Old Man could organize a correspondence with Trotsky in spite of Foerster’s absolute prohibition.”²¹ At that point, the conversation between Stalin and Krupskaya took place. He referred to the decision of the Central Committee Plenum, which invested him with “personal responsibility for Lenin’s isolation, both from personal dealings with rank-and-file party members, as well as

from correspondence.”²² Formally guided by his new powers, Stalin rudely insulted Krupskaya for supposedly having violated this decision.

Krupskaya’s letter to Kamenev on the following day reflects the character of her exchange with Stalin, as well as her reaction to it. In the letter she appealed to Kamenev and Zinoviev to protect her “from the rude interference in my personal life, which is undeserving of such abuse and threats.”²³

When he learned of Stalin’s rudeness toward his wife, as well as that the episode was known to other parties, Lenin felt deeply offended. Sensing his utter helplessness in this situation — the helplessness of a man confined to his bed — Lenin responded with the only means available to him: he sent Stalin (along with copies to Zinoviev and Kamenev) a letter in which he proposed “to advise whether you agree to take back what you said and apologize, or if you prefer to sever relations between us.”²⁴ In Lenin’s entire correspondence, there exists no other letter like this with a threat to break off relations.

Lenin’s words about Stalin, which were relayed to Trotsky by Krupskaya in 1926, were obviously related to this episode: “He is lacking elementary honesty, the simplest human honesty.”²⁵ These words in a more sharpened form appear to support the moral characterization of Stalin presented in Lenin’s “Testament.”

Apparently, the telephone conversation between Stalin and M. I. Ulyanova, which Volodicheva described in 1967, also took place at this time. As a result of this episode, along with other events, Ulyanova’s attitude toward Stalin changed dramatically. In this conversation with Stalin, Ulyanova threatened to appeal to Moscow workers for help “so they may teach you how to take care of Lenin.”²⁶ At that time, an appeal to the opinion of workers was a very serious threat, even for the General Secretary.

During those fateful days of early March 1923, political and personal events became closely intertwined. When he acquainted Kamenev with Lenin’s writings on the national question, Trotsky claimed:

Kamenev was completely disoriented. The idea of a triumvirate — Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev — had long been prepared ... Lenin's little note was cutting into this plan like a sharp wedge ... Kamenev was an experienced enough politician to understand immediately that at issue for Lenin was not only Georgia, but also Stalin's overall role in the Party.²⁷

In his turn, Kamenev announced that he had visited Krupskaya at her own request and that it was she who had described to him the letter about Stalin, which Lenin had just dictated. "But you, of course, know Ilyich," Krupskaya added. "He would never attempt to sever personal relations if he did not consider it necessary to shatter Stalin politically."²⁸ Kamenev openly admitted to Trotsky that he did not know how to act in the situation that had developed.

In his response to Kamenev, which he requested that Kamenev circulate to the other members of the triumvirate, Trotsky insisted that he did not intend to incite a struggle at the Congress to take organizational measures against Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinsky.

I stand for the preservation of the status quo. If Lenin is back on his feet before the Congress, which, unfortunately, is unlikely, then we will discuss the question anew ... I am essentially in agreement with Lenin; I want a radical change in our national policy; I want the repression of Stalin's Georgian opponents to stop; I want to end the repression of the party by the administrative apparatus; I also want a more consistent course of industrialization, as well as honest cooperation at the top. Stalin's resolution on the national question is good for nothing; in his policy, a rude and impudent great-power chauvinism stands on the same level as the protests and resistance of small, weak, and backward nationalities. I gave my resolution the form of amendments to Stalin's resolution to ensure that he can make the necessary changes in his policy. But a complete about-face is required.²⁹

Kamenev declared that he accepted all of Trotsky's proposals but feared only that Stalin would become obstinate, "rude," and "capricious." "I do not think so," Trotsky replied. "Stalin hardly has another way out at this point."

Late at night Kamenev reported to Trotsky that he had visited Stalin, who accepted all of Trotsky's conditions. Trotsky later recalled:

It seemed to me, however, that Kamenev's tone had changed since the time we had parted several hours before. Only later it became clear to me that this sudden change had occurred because of the deterioration of Lenin's health.³⁰

A letter from Kamenev to Zinoviev on 7 March reflects the extent to which the triumvirate was troubled by the contents of Lenin's latest notes. In it, Kamenev told about his conversation with Trotsky and about the copy he had received from him of Lenin's letter to Mdivani and Makharadze. From this short letter Kamenev gathered that Lenin was essentially in solidarity "with Mdivani and Company" and was disavowing Ordzhonikidze, Stalin, and Dzerzhinsky. Referring later to Lenin's personal letter to Stalin, Kamenev noted that "Stalin responded with a highly restrained and sour apology which hardly would have satisfied the Old Man."³¹

When informing Zinoviev about his intention to reach solutions in Georgia that would represent a compromise between the two warring groups, Kamenev added:

I'm afraid that this will not satisfy the Old Man, who apparently wants not only peace in the Caucasus, but also definite organizational conclusions at the top.³²

On that same day, Stalin sent a top secret letter to Ordzhonikidze in which he reported that Lenin had sent their common enemies "a short letter, in which he expresses his solidarity with the deviationists and abuses you, Comrade Dzerzhinsky, and me. It appears that his goal is to encourage the will of the Georgian Communist Party Congress to support the deviationists."³³ For this reason, Stalin advised Ordzhonikidze to achieve a compromise with the Georgian oppositionists at the Georgian Party Congress.

Only after hearing of the serious deterioration of Lenin's health from Volodicheva, who brought Lenin's letter to him that day, Stalin abruptly changed his conduct. Regarding Lenin's letter, he declared, "This is not Lenin speaking, this is his illness speaking." Then he gave Volodicheva a letter containing his response. Instead of an apology for his action, Stalin

included another dose of his typical impudence, intended to add to Lenin's agitation. The letter concluded with the following words:

My conversations with Krupskaya confirmed that in this matter there was — and could be — nothing more than misunderstandings.

However, if you believe that, in order to preserve our “relations,” I must “take back” the words I uttered, then I can take them back, while refusing, however, to understand what is going on here, where my “guilt” lies, or what, essentially, is wanted of me.³⁴

One day later, having received confirmation that Lenin had become disabled, Stalin reported the news in an encrypted telegram to Kamenev in Tiflis.

Trotsky later wrote, “At the Georgian conference, Kamenev carried out Stalin's policy against Lenin. Cemented by personal treachery (against Lenin and Trotsky – V. R.), the troika had become a fact.”³⁵

1. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 464 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 489].

2. Там же, С. 464–465 [Ibid.].

3. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 179 [Information of the CC CPSU, 1990, № 10, “Letter from L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and CCC,” 23 October 1923, p. 179].

4. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 465 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 489].

5. Валентинов, Н. В., *Наследники Ленина*, М., 1991, С. 23 [N. V. Valentinov, *Lenin's Heirs*, Moscow, 1991, p. 23].

6. *Воспоминания о Ленине*. В пяти томах. 2-ое издание, М., 1979, Т. 1, С. 363 [Reminiscences of Lenin, Five Volumes, Second Edition, Moscow, 1979, Volume 1, p. 363].

7. This assertion by Bukharin was a particularly cynical lie. During Lenin's illness in 1922, not only Stalin but other members of the Central Committee also visited Lenin in Gorki. Moreover, in 1923, Lenin met with many of his comrades, but not once with Stalin.

8. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 200 [Information of the CC CPSU, 1989, № 12, “M. I. Ulyanova on V. I. Lenin's Attitude Toward I. V. Stalin,” 1926, p. 200].

9. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 3, С. 185 [Information of the CC CPSU, 1991, № 3, M. I. Ulyanova, “On Vladimir Ilyich,” p. 185].

10. On that day Lenin's attending physician, A. M. Kozhevnikov noted in his diary: “Stalin visited. Discussion of suicide.” [Pravda, 21 January 1993].

11. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 6, С. 191 [Information of the CC CPSU, 1991, № 6, M. I. Ulyanova, “On Vladimir Ilyich,” p. 191].

- [12.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, М., 1991, С. 72 [Leon Trotsky, “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin,” 13 October 1939, p. 72].
- [13.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 197 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 12, “M. I. Ulyanova on V. I. Lenin’s Attitude Toward I. V. Stalin,” 1926, p. 197].
- [14.](#) Авторханов, А., *Технология власти*, М., 1991, С. 67–68 [A. Avtorkhanov, *Technology of Power*, Moscow, 1991, pp. 67–68].
- [15.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 198 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 12, “M. I. Ulyanova on V. I. Lenin’s Attitude Toward I. V. Stalin,” 1926, p. 198].
- [16.](#) In 1967, Fotieva recalled that while Lenin was still alive, M. I. Ulyanova had said to her: “Stalin is the most intelligent man in the Party after Lenin” (*Pravda*, 21 January 1993).
- [17.](#) Там же, С. 199 [“M. I. Ulyanova on V. I. Lenin’s Attitude Toward I. V. Stalin,” p. 199].
- [18.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [19.](#) *Коммунист*, 1989, № 5, С. 105 [*Communist*, 1989, № 5, p. 105].
- [20.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 191 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 12, “L. B. Kamenev to I. V. Stalin,” no later than 22 December 1922, p. 191].
- [21.](#) Там же, С. 192 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 12, “I. V. Stalin to L. B. Kamenev,” 22 December 1922, p. 192].
- [22.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [23.](#) Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 54, С. 675 [Cf. Lenin, *CW*, Volume 45, “N. K. Krupskaya to L. B. Kamenev,” 23 December 1922, see p. 758].
- [24.](#) Там же, С. 329–330 [Ibid., “To Comrade Stalin,” 5 March 1923, p. 608].
- [25.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 69 [Trotsky, “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin,” p. 69].
- [26.](#) *Московские новости*, 1989, 23 апреля [*Moscow News*, 23 April 1989].
- [27.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 460–461 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 485].
- [28.](#) Там же, С. 461 [Ibid.].
- [29.](#) Там же [Ibid., pp. 485–486].
- [30.](#) Там же, С. 462 [Ibid., p. 486].
- [31.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 151 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “L. B. Kamenev to G. Ye. Zinoviev,” 7 March 1923, p. 151].
- [32.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [33.](#) Там же, С. 151–152 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, “I. V. Stalin to G. K. Ordzhonikidze,” 7 March 1923, pp. 151–152].
- [34.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 12, С. 193 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 12, “I. V. Stalin to V. I. Lenin,” 7 March 1923, p. 193].
- [35.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 462 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 486].

Дружеские шаржи.



Л. Б. Каменев в представлении художника Дени.

Lev Kamenev as depicted by Deni in 1923

11. Trotsky's Mistake

In his memoirs, Trotsky repeatedly returned to the question of why he had not spoken openly at the beginning of 1923 against the triumvirate by appealing to the party. His explanations in this regard are extremely contradictory. On the one hand, he wrote that the bureaucratic reaction had already advanced so far by that time, that neither the continuation of Lenin's political activity nor the formation of a "Lenin-Trotsky bloc" would have been able to defeat it. In support of this assertion, however, Trotsky usually only quoted the words of Krupskaya relating to 1927: "Were Lenin alive today, then probably he would already be sitting in a Stalinist prison."¹

On the other hand, Trotsky also expressed directly opposing views; namely, his belief that, had Lenin remained in the leadership, at least until the Twelfth Congress, he undoubtedly would have been able to implement his plans for a regrouping of the party leadership. Their joint action at the beginning of 1923 would certainly have secured a victory.

Moreover, Trotsky also expressed certainty that, after making an appeal in the spirit of a "Lenin-Trotsky bloc" on the eve of the Twelfth Party Congress, he could have secured a victory even without the direct participation of Lenin in the struggle. He wrote:

In 1922 and 1923, it was still fully possible to establish a commanding position by an open assault upon the rapidly consolidating faction of national-socialist functionaries, usurpers in the apparatus, illegitimate heirs of October, and epigones of Bolshevism.²

As the entire course of subsequent events showed, Trotsky's decisive mistake — not only tactical, but strategic — was that he was not prepared at the time to take that step. As Trotsky himself wrote, the main impediment to this step was the uncertain condition of Lenin's health. Right up until 6 March, it was expected that Lenin would get back on his feet again, as he had done after his first stroke, and take part in the work of the Twelfth Congress.

On 5 March, the Politburo passed a resolution to postpone the Congress scheduled for March until a later date. In a secret telegram reporting the sharp deterioration of Lenin's health, which Stalin sent on 10 March on behalf of the Politburo to the Regional Party Committees, he explained:

An improvement in Lenin's health, albeit slow, has been observed until only recently. Firmly counting on this improvement, the last plenum of the CC resolved for the time being not even to publish several resolutions prior to the Congress, hoping instead that it will be possible in another week or two to consult with Vladimir Ilyich regarding them.²

In fact, according to the diaries of the attending physicians and Lenin's secretaries, right up until 5 March his health improved, although not entirely smoothly. On 30 January, Lenin asked his doctor whether he would be able to speak at the Congress on 30 March; the doctor answered that he would not, yet suggested that by the time of the Congress Lenin "would be on his feet."⁴ Right up until 5 March Lenin retained his capacity to work. He dictated his article, "Better Fewer, but Better," finished it on 2 March, and also studied the "Georgian case." In the middle of February, as recorded in the diary of his secretaries, he asked them to hurry with the fulfillment of his directives, since he "wants definitely to prepare something for the congress, and hopes that he will be able to do so. If, however, we drag things out and ruin things, then he will be very, very dissatisfied."⁵

As Lenin's secretary Gliasser recalled:

He literally "directed" the commission he created that was in charge of investigating "the Georgian case," [and] worried terribly that ... he would not be able to prepare his presentation before the congress. He also made us

promise to hold everything in the strictest secrecy until completion of the work, and to say nothing about his article (“On the Question of Nationalities, or on ‘Autonomization’” – V. R.), [insofar as] he had the constant feeling that he was no longer being taken into consideration.⁶

Only after learning that the article had been sent to Trotsky and a positive response had been received from him, Lenin “felt glad and seemed to calm down.”⁷

Having reviewed all of these facts, we may conclude that Lenin hoped — right up until 6 March — that he would be able to take part in the work of the congress and deliver a “bomb” at it against Stalin. Obviously, the bomb would have been primarily the “Letter to the Congress” and the article “On the Question of Nationalities, or on ‘Autonomization.’” Information about Lenin’s intentions reached Trotsky in part.

During these days, while continuing to wage the struggle against the triumvirate on a series of major issues, Trotsky could not bring himself to take this struggle beyond the Politburo and thus directly place himself in opposition to the triumvirate, as he did a few months later, in October 1923. While explaining his lack of resolve at the time, he wrote in 1929:

The idea of a “Lenin and Trotsky” bloc against the apparatus-men and bureaucrats was at the time fully known only to Lenin and me; the remaining members of the Politburo had merely a vague notion of it ... My action would have been understood, or, more accurately, depicted, as my personal struggle for Lenin’s place in the party and in the state. I could not think about this without shuddering ... Will the party understand that the issue is the battle of Lenin and Trotsky for the future of the revolution, and not the battle of Trotsky for the ailing Lenin’s place?⁸

Subsequently, Trotsky paid attention to the “paradox of the situation” that arose during the final months of Lenin’s activity: fearing a split within the party over the hostile relations between Trotsky and Stalin, Lenin called upon Trotsky to intensify the struggle against Stalin.

The contradiction here, however, is only superficial. It was specifically in the interests of a stable party leadership in the future that Lenin wanted now to condemn Stalin sharply and disarm him. I was restrained by the apprehension that any sharp conflict in the ruling group at a time when Lenin was

struggling with death, could be understood by the party as the casting of lots over Lenin's mantle.⁹

Somewhat earlier, Trotsky mentioned one more motive for his lack of resolve at the beginning of 1923:

I avoided the struggle to the utmost, insofar as during its initial stages it possessed the character of an unprincipled conspiracy directed against me personally. It was clear to me that a struggle of this nature, once it broke out, would inevitably assume an exceptional intensity, and in conditions of a revolutionary dictatorship might lead to dangerous consequences. This is not the place to discuss the correctness of striving to preserve the basis for collective work at the cost of extreme personal compromises, or whether it was necessary for me to go on the offensive all along the line, despite the lack of sufficient political grounds for this.¹⁰

It is difficult to agree with these assertions by Trotsky. At that time, Trotsky had more than sufficient political grounds for an open attack against the triumvirate. Trotsky saw that, in Lenin's speeches and letters, he persistently directed attention toward those same dangers which he mentioned in one of their final conversations. The course of events in the Politburo and the Central Committee clearly showed how real the danger of a split, to which Lenin continually and fearfully alluded, had actually become. Mobilizing the party against the threat that had been maturing of the bureaucratic degeneration of the political regime was becoming an ever more urgent task.



Adolf Abramovich Ioffe and Lev Davidovich Trotsky

The heart of the matter lay in the fact that Trotsky, despite the legend circulated by the triumvirate during those days — and galvanized in our time — about his striving for personal dictatorship, allowed errors at the time (and in subsequent years) of quite an opposite kind. A farewell letter addressed to Trotsky from Adolf A. Ioffe, who committed suicide at the height of the attacks on the Opposition in November 1927, helps one to understand the nature of these errors. Ioffe wrote:

You and I, dear Lev Davidovich, have been bound by a decade of collaborative work and personal friendship, I dare to hope. This gives me the right to tell you in parting what I feel is mistaken in you.

I have never doubted the correctness of the path that you have marked out, and you know that I've followed it along with you for more than twenty years. ... But I have always felt you lack Lenin's *inflexibility, his refusal to compromise* and his readiness to remain alone, if necessary, on the path that he considered as the correct one, foreseeing a future majority, and the future recognition by all that this path is correct.

Politically you have always been right, beginning in 1905; and I have told you more than once that I heard with my own ears how Lenin acknowledged that in 1905 *not he, but you were correct*. (Ioffe had in mind here the theory of "permanent revolution" – V. R.). No one lies when faced with death, and I repeat this to you one more time now ... But you have often forsaken your

own correctness in favor of an agreement or compromise that you valued too highly. This is a mistake.¹¹

It was precisely traits that were noticed in Trotsky by his closest friend that determined his crucial mistakes at the beginning of 1923. Trotsky was consistent, decisive, and, in the end, implacable in the struggle against class enemies, which was revealed during the years of the October Revolution and the Civil War. He was decisive, and even excessively self-assured — using Lenin’s characterization — when faced with a battle over principles or the interests of the cause. However, he did not display the same resoluteness in the struggle that consisted 90 percent of behind-the-scenes intrigues, provocations, and the secret conspiracies of his personal opponents, who could be found beside him in the same party.

Precisely for this reason, he lost the initiative and a series of favorable opportunities that opened up before him at the beginning of 1923: he refused to deliver the political report at the Twelfth Party Congress; twice he rejected the proposal to become deputy chairman of the Sovnarkom, that is, the virtual head of state in Lenin’s absence; he allowed a number of compromises in the Politburo. For example, on 1 February, when Stalin proposed that he be relieved from the responsibility of making sure that the regimen prescribed for Lenin by the physicians be carried out, Trotsky did not prevent the rejection of this proposal, nor did he propose that such a responsibility be transferred from Stalin and to himself.

All these examples of Trotsky’s conduct, one must believe, were dictated by Trotsky’s own apprehensions that his assumption of new political responsibilities in the face of the existing alignment of forces within the Politburo would lead to a new wave of intrigues and provocations directed against him personally, and camouflaged by pseudo-principled considerations. Evidently, fearing charges of factionalism, Trotsky did not take any measures during the period preceding the Twelfth Party Congress to rally around himself any supporters or party activists who were dissatisfied with the political line of the “troika”; in this way he failed to secure organized action at the congress against the attempts of the “troika” to usurp the power of the party. Trotsky resolved to take this step only six months later, when Lenin

was fully cut off from political activity, and when the triumvirate had significantly strengthened its positions.

Trotsky resolved to stipulate conditions to the triumvirate only when he had received a direct and insistent appeal by Lenin for a combined struggle. But this occurred only on 6 March, on the day when Lenin's health took a sharp turn for the worse. The possibility of victory in the struggle against the "conspiracy of the epigones" had been lost.

1. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 457 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 481].

2. Там же [Ibid.].

3. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 6, С. 199 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 6, М. I. Ulyanova, "On Vladimir Ilyich," p. 199].

4. Ленин В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 477 [Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, Volume 45, "The Diary of Lenin's Secretaries," p. 477].

5. Там же, С. 485 [Ibid., p. 485].

6. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 163 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, "М. I. Gliasser to N. I. Bukharin," 11 January 1924, p. 163].

7. Там же [Ibid.].

8. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 457, 458 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 481–482].

9. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 284 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, "On Lenin's Testament," December 31, 1932, in *The Suppressed Testament of Lenin*, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1946, p. 38].

10. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Что и как произошло?*, Париж, 1929, С. 34 [Leon Trotsky, *What Happened, and How?*, 1929, Paris, p. 34; Cf. "Stalin's Victory," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, Pathfinder Press, 1975, pp. 42–43].

11. Цит. по: Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 341 [See: Nadezhda Joffe [Ioffe], *Back in Time*, Labor Publications, 1995, p. 62].

ПРОЖЕКТОР

Пролетарии
соединяйтесь

№ 15.

15 сентября 1923 г.

№ 15.

В. И. Ленин.



Lenin in Gorki on 28 August 1923

12. Victory of the Triumvirate

According to the recently published diary of Lenin's physician, after 9 March Lenin completely lost his ability to speak and for several months thereafter lay in a semi-conscious state. The patient could not be left alone even for a minute and he was constantly attended by a doctor and a nurse. The atmosphere that reigned in these months in Lenin's home was described by Krupskaya on 6 May 1923 in a letter to Inna A. Armand (the daughter of Inessa Armand):

The doctors ... can say nothing with certainty. There's no way to describe what is taking place now ... And everyone has left; although they express sympathy, they are afraid to stop by.¹

This atmosphere seems to explain why Krupskaya, who was now constantly at Lenin's bedside, did not have the opportunity — or at least could not decide without his direct instructions — to submit the “Testament” to the Twelfth Party Congress.

Once they became certain that Lenin would be unable to influence the course of events, at least in the short stretch of time preceding the congress, the triumvirate went on a decisive attack aimed at forcing Trotsky out of the leadership and taking all power into their own hands. The unprincipled activity of the triumvirate, in which none of its three members yet played a leading role, anticipated a future split in the party and thus paved the way for the establishment of Stalinism.

Unfettered by Trotsky's moral considerations, the “troika” consolidated to an even greater extent after 6 March. Their main difficulty at this time lay in declaring open war on Trotsky, whose name

communists still associated with the name of Lenin. In both the party and in the country, Trotsky enjoyed a popularity that was only slightly less than that enjoyed by Lenin. His authority was much greater, moreover, than that of Stalin, Zinoviev, or Kamenev. In the elections to the presidium at party meetings, in the protocols of sessions of Central Committee Plenums, etc., the names of the party leaders at that time were listed or announced, not in alphabetical order, but according to their political weight (although no official regulation existed for this practice). The first name on such lists was usually Lenin, followed by Trotsky. Even at the Twelfth Party Congress, the opening speeches of workers' delegations most often concluded with salutations in honor of the two leaders of the party, Lenin and Trotsky. Trotsky's role in organizing the October insurrection and the Red Army was disputed by no one. In the first six months of 1923, the pages of *Pravda*, as well as central and provincial publications, contained articles about Trotsky, not only by those communists who were close to him,² but also by individuals like Anatoly Lunacharsky and even Emelyan Yaroslavsky, who would later become one of the most zealous ideologues in the battle against "Trotskyism." These articles spoke in no less elevated tones about Trotsky than about Lenin.

Under these conditions, the triumvirate and its supporters did not yet dare to raise the issue of "Trotskyism," and for the time being used only the methods of clandestine intrigues in the struggle against Trotsky.

On 31 March 1923, three weeks after Lenin disengaged from work, a session of the Central Committee plenum decided to assign the report of the Central Committee at the Twelfth Congress to Zinoviev and Stalin, dividing the themes between them: a political report and a report on the party's organizational activity. Trotsky did not object to this proposal and took responsibility for a report on industry. The theses of Trotsky's report, which described his principal thoughts on the relationship between the principles of planning and the market under NEP conditions, was at first accepted by the Politburo without discussion. It was only when it became clear that there was no longer any hope for Lenin's return to work that the troika made a complete about-face. They

now tried to show, initially in the eyes of the CC, that Trotsky was opposed to the majority in the Politburo.

Before the March Plenum of the CC, the triumvirs, with the support of the remaining members and candidate-members of the Politburo, prepared their own “bomb” against Trotsky — a letter to all full members and candidate-members of the Central Committee. In the letter they described their numerous disagreements with Trotsky, which included even various formulations from his works, and at the same time denied the possibility that “in the Politburo there is some kind of biased majority, bound by circle ties.”³

One of the main charges contained in the letter was the accusation that, with the proposals outlined in his report on industry, for a clearer demarcation between party and governmental work, as well as for less interference by party organs in the work of economic institutions, “Trotsky is offering a helping hand to those who want to liquidate the leading role of the party.” The authors of the article were particularly irritated by Trotsky’s article, published in *Pravda*, in which he asserted that party organs should concentrate on purely political work, and that deciding economic questions by party means would lead to superficial solutions.⁴

Trotsky indirectly described the background to this campaign in his report to the All-Ukrainian party Conference. He said:

Of course, comrades, the party consists of real, living human beings; all people have their shortcomings and defects; and communists, too, possess much that is “human, all too human,” as the Germans say. There are and will always be both personal and group conflicts, both serious and trivial, for a large party cannot exist without them; but the moral weight, the political specific weight of the party is defined by what rises to the surface when tragedy strikes (Trotsky had in mind Lenin’s illness – V. R.): the will toward unity and discipline, or that which is secondary, personal, and “human, all too human.”⁵

The psychological result of the campaign which began against Trotsky just before the congress was that Trotsky again began to demonstrate indecisiveness. He apparently feared that his disclosure of real differences

within the Politburo at a time when it opposed him for the first time as a united front might perhaps be perceived and understood as the kindling of a dispute or as a factional stand; therefore Trotsky limited himself at the congress to his own political report, which presented a detailed conception of the New Economic Policy.

The struggle, therefore, had only been begun by Lenin and Trotsky against the rapidly growing bureaucratism.

But the struggle, which was never carried out to its end, or even to the halfway point, produced precisely the opposite results. Lenin managed, essentially, only to *declare* war on Stalin and his supporters, and even this was known only to those who were directly involved in it, and not to the party as a whole.⁶

Submitting to the triumvirate's false interpretation of party loyalty, Trotsky did not even attempt at the congress to consolidate those forces that were prepared to raise the issue of the unhealthy state of the inner-party regime that had developed. The acuteness with which a definite section of the party perceived this issue is reflected by the contents of a document, circulated secretly on the eve of the congress under the title "The Contemporary State of the Russian Communist Party and the Tasks of the Proletarian Communist Vanguard." The authors of the document, according to Zinoviev, might have been the leaders of the former faction of "Democratic Centralism" (Osinsky, Sapronov, V. M. Smirnov).

Only at the end of 1923, Emmanuil Kviring, a supporter of the Central Committee majority, who was engaged in a polemic with the Opposition, disclosed part of this "notorious anonymous platform," entitled "The Struggle for Democracy." A section of it read:

Such a struggle is the indispensable requirement of any conscious party member who is devoted to the revolution. It must be waged by means of thorough criticism and discussion, which are the individual rights of a party member, and formally allowed by the leading group. We must abolish decrees prohibiting inner-party groupings, and there must be an end to persecuting comrades who speak out collectively on party and soviet problems.

It is essential to drive firmly into the consciousness of the party: 1) that there is no party democracy without criticism and discussion; 2) that without the right to collective statements, there is not and cannot be criticism and

discussion, as the experience of the period between the Tenth and Eleventh Congresses has demonstrated, and as is being demonstrated at the Eleventh Congress itself; 3) that the “support of party unity” by means of mechanically exerting pressure signifies in practice the dictatorship by a specific group, and the formation within the party (insofar as it cannot be transformed into a barracks form of communism) of several illegal groupings; that is, it leads to the most profound undermining of inner unity, to moral degeneration and ideological deadening.⁷

Other sections in the platform spoke of the need for a clear distinction between “party” and “soviet” work, including the “strictest demarcation” between the functions of the Central Committee and those of the All-Union state organs — the Council of People’s Commissars and the Central Executive Committee. The platform proposed:

To open to non-party members truly broad and unimpeded access to all soviet positions, including elected positions. Our goal is *to destroy the monopoly of Communists on senior positions*, to remove from the party membership card the significance of a license, and in this way to reduce the entry into the party of careerists and weaken the development of careerism, unprincipled activity, and philistinism in the ranks of the party.

Finally, the authors of the platform considered it imperative for the Twelfth Congress to remove from the party leadership “one or two party officials from the leading group who are most inclined toward factionalism (who have most demoralized their party cadres, and who have most facilitated the development of bureaucratism under the cover of hypocritical rhetoric): *Zinoviev, Stalin, and Kamenev*.”⁸

These ideas and proposals undoubtedly corresponded to Trotsky’s own. However, he formulated his own critical attitude toward the inner-party regime that had developed only in letters that he sent to all members of the Central Committee. Thus, in a letter written on 22 March 1923, he wrote: “The Politburo and Orgburo must renounce the prevailing system, which *supplants party leadership and assignment of members with secretarial harassment*.”⁹

Nevertheless, neither Trotsky nor anyone sharing his views publicly raised a note of protest against the ruling faction’s use of this system to elect delegates to the congress. At many regional conferences delegates

were elected unopposed, according to the recommendations of regional committee secretaries, who, in turn, had been chosen since 1922 on recommendation from the Central Committee; in other words, such delegates were essentially appointed by the Secretariat. As a result, the overwhelming majority of delegates at the Twelfth Party Congress consisted of officials from the party apparatus. According to the report of the credentials committee, 55.1 percent of the delegates performed “party work exclusively” and 28.8 percent combined party work with other work. Moreover, 30 percent of all regional committee secretaries were recommended by the Central Committee Secretariat.

Only on 8 October 1923, in a letter to the Central Committee, Trotsky noted that, “A great many party members — and by no means the worst — regarded with the greatest alarm the means and methods by which the Twelfth Congress was summoned. The majority of the delegates to the congress felt this anxiety.” It was only the desire to preserve unity in party work as Lenin’s illness was getting worse, Trotsky explained, which “smoothed over the group differences within the party and compelled many to suppress their dissatisfaction and not to carry their legitimate concerns to the tribune of the congress.”¹⁰

For this reason, the statements at both the pre-congress session and at the congress itself expressing opposition to the triumvirate’s group-oriented, and essentially factional policy, as well as to its crude suppression of the free expression of party opinion, turned out to be inconsistent and uncoordinated.

The “Discussion Page” of *Pravda* published an article by Korzinov, “More on the Article by Comrade Lenin,” in which the author asserted that separate individuals, rather than the whole collective, might influence domestic and foreign policy. “The Central Committee itself is partly responsible for this phenomenon,” Korzinov added, “by facilitating at party congresses the election to the Central Committee of members who would execute the will of various influential individuals.”¹¹

At the congress itself, V. Kosior and Lutovinov demanded that the ban on party factions and groupings be removed. Preobrazhensky warned of the transformation of “recommendations,” or, more explicitly, the

appointment of leading officials in the provinces by the Central Committee Secretariat, into a system. Leonid Krasin, N. Osinsky, and Yuri Larin insisted upon broadening the independence of soviet and economic organs, emphasizing that the resolution of the Eleventh Party Congress about not allowing party organs to replace the functions of government institutions was not being implemented.

However, the triumvirs and their supporters managed at the congress to reduce to a minimum all discussion of changes in the political system, and even of Lenin's recommendations on this question. His recommendations were discussed not at a plenary session of the congress, but at its organizational section, where Molotov attempted to water them down to a significant degree. "It would be wrong if we say that the Central Control Commission must guarantee the party line 'inside the party itself,'" he declared. "For this, we have leading party organs (i.e., the Politburo, Orgburo, and Secretariat of the CC – V. R.)."¹²

In his speech at the section, the Deputy Chair of Sovnarkom, Tsiurupa, who had recently been appointed Commissar of Rabkrin, stated:

At the hurried pace at which we are now working, it is impossible to discuss in sufficient detail either the old Rabkrin, or the magnitude of the task posed by Ilyich. ... I think we are devoting insufficient attention to this question. If Vladimir Ilyich had been present at this congress, he would have made this question the linchpin of the congress. He emphasized this question with all his might, and we have not had at the congress even a report. A report on this issue is being given in a section, and it is being placed on the same level as other organizational questions ... And if we are going to carry on our work in this fashion, comrades, then we will spoil the whole affair and thus discredit Vladimir Ilyich's very idea, which has colossal importance.¹³

Tsiurupa proposed to create a special commission for working over the given issue more thoroughly; however, his proposal was not put to a vote, and the sectional meeting closed immediately following his speech. As a result, the resolution of the congress on the organizational question severely watered down the content of Lenin's ideas to elevate the role of the Central Control Commission and Rabkrin, and his plan for political reform was accepted in a significantly truncated form.

The Central Committee membership was broadened insignificantly at the congress: the number of its full members increased from twenty-seven to forty, while the number of its candidate-members decreased from nineteen to seventeen. At the same time, the membership of the Central Control Commission was increased nearly ten times; however, only one-third of those Central Control Commission members elected at the congress were workers who continued to work in the industrial sector, while the remaining two-thirds were officials of local organs of party and state control. Moreover, the increase in the number of Central Control Commission members and candidate-members to fifty and ten, respectively, was supplemented by the creation of new organizational superstructures that stood over the Central Control Commission plenums. The work of the CCC was to be directed henceforth by a Presidium of nine members, who, in their turn, elected a secretariat to carry out routine work, and a special party collegium to oversee violations of party ethics, as well as the Statutes and Program of the party. These superstructures of the apparatus, which were higher than the CCC, subsequently became a strong offensive force in the battle against the Opposition; that is, they played a role directly contrary to that which Lenin had assigned to the Central Control Commission.

The resolution by the congress on the organizational question indicated that the right to attend Politburo meetings belonged not to all members of the CCC in succession, as Lenin had proposed, but only to “three permanent members of the CCC belonging to its Presidium.” Only members of the CCC Presidium were permitted to see the documents of the Politburo.¹⁴

Thus, the congress essentially rejected the mechanism proposed by Lenin of the CCC’s control activity; as a result, the monopoly of power exercised by the Politburo in both the party and the country was preserved.

In the speeches of several delegates at the congress, an attempt was made to raise personal questions for discussion. V. Kosior, for example, called attention to the attempt by the majority of the Politburo to remove Trotsky and other Communists from leading work “merely because at

various times and for various reasons they participated in one or another grouping, or because they participated in discussions against the official line being conducted by the Central Committee.”¹⁵

In responding to these charges, in his concluding remarks on his own report, Stalin touched on the question of Trotsky, declaring that the latter had rejected Lenin’s proposal to become his deputy in Sovnarkom. Later, Stalin said: “In January of this year I repeated Lenin’s proposal and added that if he wished, Trotsky could either accept the post of deputy and thereby take charge, so to speak, of the Supreme Economic Council [VSNKh], or he could accept the post of deputy while taking charge of Gosplan, which he was very interested in.” Stalin enigmatically suggested that Trotsky refused these offers because “Trotsky, obviously, has some sort of motive, reason, or cause which will not allow him to accept, in addition to his military work, other, more difficult work.”¹⁶ (This part of Stalin’s speech was removed, at his request, from the transcript of the congress and published only in the text of the transcript printed in 1968).

Trotsky reacted to Stalin’s pronouncements not very auspiciously. At the beginning of his speech on industry, Trotsky said that “the statement by Comrade Kosior about the insufficient use of my powers” had been highly inappropriate, and mentioned “the further development of this incident,” having Stalin’s words in mind. Trotsky declared that he was prepared to give the congress all necessary explanations with regard to this question, should the congress demand them. “If, however, the congress does not feel that it is necessary to investigate this issue any further, then I, on my part, will take no initiative and will consider that, for the congress at this point, the question has been settled.”¹⁷

Trotsky’s declaration indicated that he still hoped for a clarification of his conflicts with the troika through an additional demand of the congress, and, at the same time, he feared that the discussion of this question might degenerate into an unprincipled squabble.

Evidently, the lack of consistency and coordination in the speeches against the triumvirate was the reaction provoked by Osinsky’s speech. Although he had spoken of Stalin and Kamenev in positive terms,

Osinsky had criticized Zinoviev severely for his yearning to become “leader” and for the irresponsible charges of “revising Leninism” that he had hurled at his opponents during the pre-congress discussion. Osinsky’s criticism was answered, not by Zinoviev, but by Stalin, who accused Osinsky of “having chosen to break up the core which had formed within the Central Committee.” After naming the members of that “core,” that is, of the triumvirate, Stalin resorted to the basest of threats against Osinsky:

If Comrade Osinsky is seriously thinking of launching such attacks against one or another member of the core of our Central Committee, then I must warn him that he will run into a solid wall, against which, I fear, he will smash his head.^{[18](#)}

On the whole, the Twelfth Party Congress demonstrated that the party possessed significant intellectual potential at that time. All subsequent party congresses, right up to the Seventeenth, at which Stalin was acknowledged as the singular leader of the party, demonstrated the steady loss of that intellectual potential, insofar as the main attention at each of those subsequent congresses was not concentrated on open discussion of party theory and policy, but on the unprincipled persecution of the inner-party oppositions.

However, Stalin’s preparation of the Twelfth Congress through the apparatus, Trotsky’s indecisiveness, and the ignorance of the majority of delegates about the internal struggle within the Politburo all combined to make the organizational results of the Twelfth Party Congress as favorable as possible for the triumvirate. Recalling these results at the Fourteenth Party Congress, Zinoviev noted:

You all know that there were discussions at the Twelfth Congress regarding the core which had formed within the Central Committee, and that the Twelfth Congress agreed tacitly (! – V. R.) that this core would lead our party, of course with the full support of the entire Central Committee, until Ilyich recovered.^{[19](#)}

At the plenum of the Central Committee which convened after the congress, Bukharin was added to the Politburo; by this time he had

become a reliable ally of the triumvirate. Trotsky found himself in a position of ever greater isolation.

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- [1.](#) Известия ЦК КПСС, 1989, № 4, С. 179 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 4, “N. K. Krupskaya to I. A. Armand,” 6 May 1923, p. 179].
 - [2.](#) Radek’s article, “Lev Trotsky — Organizer of Victory,” for example, appeared in *Pravda* on 14 March 1923.
 - [3.](#) Двенадцатый съезд РКП(б). Стенографический отчет, 1968, С. 818 [*Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b)*, Stenographic Record, 1968, p. 818].
 - [4.](#) Там же, С. 817 [*Ibid.*, p. 817].
 - [5.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., «Задачи XII Съезда РКП», *Правда*, 12 апреля 1923 [Leon Trotsky, “Tasks Before the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party,” *Pravda*, 12 April 1923].
 - [6.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 463 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 488].
 - [7.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 14 декабря [*Pravda*, 14 December 1923].
 - [8.](#) Вопросы истории КПСС, 1991, № 1, С. 53 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1991, № 1, p. 53].
 - [9.](#) Известия ЦК КПСС, 1990, № 10, С. 175 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, “Letter of L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and CCC of the RKP(b),” 23 October 1923, p. 175].
 - [10.](#) Известия ЦК КПСС, 1990, № 5, С. 165–166 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, “Letter of L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and CCC of the RKP(b),” 8 October 1923, p. 165–166].
 - [11.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 24 марта [*Pravda*, 24 March 1923].
 - [12.](#) Политическое образование, 1988, № 10, С. 37 [*Political Education*, 1988, № 10, p. 37].
 - [13.](#) Коммунист, 1990, № 5, С. 41 [*Communist*, 1990, № 5, p. 41].
 - [14.](#) Двенадцатый съезд РКП(б), С. 702 [*Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b)*, p. 702].
 - [15.](#) Там же, С. 102 [*Ibid.*, p. 102].
 - [16.](#) Там же, С. 198–199 [*Ibid.*, pp. 198–199].
 - [17.](#) Там же, С. 398 [*Ibid.*, p. 398].
 - [18.](#) Там же, С. 201 [*Ibid.*, p. 201].
 - [19.](#) Четырнадцатый съезд ВКП(б), М., 1926, С. 424 [*Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, Moscow, 1926, p. 424].



Rakovsky as Ambassador to England in 1923

Новый полпред СССР во Франции.



Rakovsky (middle) as Ambassador to France and Mdivani (third from right) as Trade Representative in France, 1925

13. First Instances of Repression and the Monopoly on Power

Having consolidated their positions at the Twelfth Party Congress, the “troika,” and Stalin most of all, initiated reprisals against dissenting figures. The first persecution of active communists by the police was the arrest of Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, a member of the Narkomnats Collegium, who in 1920–1921 chaired the Central Bureau of Communist Organizations of Peoples of the East [under the direction of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party].

During the period when the formation of the USSR was being prepared, Sultan-Galiev spoke out sharply against Stalin’s plan for “autonomization” and demanded that the number of members designated by the Union treaty be broadened to include more autonomous republics from the RSFSR, primarily the Turkestan ASSR (which included at that time Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Kirghizia, and Tadzhikistan).

He considered it abnormal to separate “the nationalities of Soviet republics into those which have the right to enter the Union Central Executive Committee, and those which do not have such a right ... to separate them into real children and stepchildren.”¹ The idea of extending the rights of autonomous republics and raising their status to that of the Soviet republics (as subjects of the USSR) was repeated by Sultan-Galiev at the Twelfth Party Congress.



*Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev
(1892–1940)*

A few days after the completion of the congress, the CCC passed a resolution to expel Sultan-Galiev from the party and turn his case over to the GPU. Immediately following the publication of the resolution, Sultan-Galiev was taken into custody on the charge of creating a nationalist organization that opposed the leadership of the party and the state. He was released only on 14 June, after Menzhinsky, the head of the secret GPU administration, dismissed the charges as well as the agents' reports that Sultan-Galiev had attempted to support the

Basmachi movement in Central Asia in its struggle against Soviet power. Nevertheless, after this incident, Stalin demanded that Sultan-Galiev's request to be reinstated into the party be denied.

Some years later, after he had broken with Stalin, Kamenev declared to Trotsky:

Remember the arrest of Sultan-Galiev in 1923? That was the first arrest of a prominent party member carried out on Stalin's initiative. Zinoviev and I, unfortunately, gave our approval. It was Stalin's first taste of blood.²

Stalin utilized the "Sultan-Galiev affair" to substantiate his evaluation of the danger posed by "national-deviationism." At a CC conference from 9 to 12 June on the national question, Kuibyshev, who chaired the Central Control Commission, gave a report "On the Anti-Party and Anti-State Activity of Sultan-Galiev." However, several conference participants, who were forced to accept on faith the information received from the CCC and GPU, nevertheless noted that inflating the "Sultan-Galiev case" would only serve to weaken the struggle against great-power chauvinism. Skrypnik, for example, directly criticized attempts to utilize this "case" for altering the party's national policy, which had been

established at the Twelfth Congress. Trotsky supported Skrypnik's objection by exclaiming, "Absolutely right!"³

At this point Stalin still did not have the opportunity to persecute his other opponents as severely as he had managed to do with Sultan-Galiev. In order to remove them from leading party and soviet work, Stalin employed the method of "diplomatic exile" against, for example, Mdivani, and Trotsky's close friend Rakovsky, who chaired the Sovnarkom in Ukraine. Following the Twelfth Congress, Rakovsky continued to struggle against Stalin's line on the national question. At a CC conference in June 1923, in reply to Stalin's charges against Rakovsky and his supporters in the Ukraine of confederalism, national-deviationism, and separatism, Rakovsky declared: "I believe that we in Ukraine are no less communist than Stalin. Therefore, whenever he attempts to introduce into the concept (of federation – V. R.) a more centralist interpretation, we will argue with him on this issue. ... Perhaps experience will show that we have to change it." Rakovsky emphasized that Stalin's absurd charge that "we wish to secede" was directed against all Ukrainian comrades.⁴

A month after the conference concluded, Rakovsky was sent to England to serve as ambassador. In a letter of 18 June, addressed to all members of both the CC and the CCC, Rakovsky stated that his appointment was a pretext for removing him from the leadership of the second-most important republic in the Union. He wrote:

The special attitude of our comrades leading the Politburo toward me became clear much earlier. It became especially evident to the members of our organization in Ukraine, as well as to several members of the organization in Russia, during the Twelfth Party Congress.⁵

The triumvirate's policy of appointing party officials, which was carried out through the CC Secretariat, was directed against all dissenting figures, and above all, against those communists who were close to Trotsky; at the same time, the triumvirate's administrative policy undermined more and more the principles of appointment by election and the independence of party organizations.

Nonetheless, as recently published documents suggest, in the summer of 1923, Stalin's position in the Politburo was still rather insecure. With increasing frequency, his proposals met resistance, and not only from Trotsky.



*Material confiscated in 1923 used for making illegal "samogon"
[homemade alcoholic beverages, moonshine]*

Resistance to Stalin was revealed, for example, in connection with the attempt to remove the ban on the sale of vodka and other strong alcoholic beverages. The ban had been introduced by the tsarist government after the First World War began and remained in effect after the October Revolution. In December 1919, Sovnarkom of the RSFSR passed a resolution bearing Lenin's signature, "On Prohibiting on the Territory of the RSFSR the Preparation and Sale of Spirits, Other Strong Alcoholic Beverages and Substances Containing Alcohol." The resolution permitted the production and sale of only grape wines with an alcoholic content no greater than 12 percent. By August 1921, spirits with an alcoholic content of up to 14 percent were permitted, and by December of the same year, the limit was raised to 20 percent. In 1923, the question of introducing a state monopoly on vodka was raised at the June Plenum of the Central Committee. Having learned of this proposal, Trotsky sent members of the CC and CCC both a letter and his own draft resolution

on the question, in which he claimed that the legalization of vodka sales for the purpose of augmenting the state budget would have “only a pernicious effect on both the revolution and the party.” He emphasized that the attempt to raise the budget on the basis of alcohol sales would serve, first, to weaken the dependence of the budget on successes in the sphere of economic construction. Second, the attempt to extract resources from the population through the sale of alcohol would have a demoralizing effect on the working class and would lower the workers’ real wages.

Although the plan to reduce the state budget deficit by means of the state sale of vodka was not passed at the June Plenum, the conference nonetheless rejected Trotsky’s own proposal, which would have prevented the very possibility of legalizing vodka trade. For this reason, Trotsky negotiated with members of the CC, trying to convince them of the inadmissibility of such a measure. As Zinoviev wrote to Stalin from Kislovodsk in July 1923:

The problem is that our people — Sergo (Ordzhonikidze), Voroshilov, and Bukharin — are greatly vacillating (i.e., about this question – V. R.). ... Even Molotov, it appears, has serious doubts.⁶

The wavering by the closest allies of the “troika” might have been exacerbated by *Pravda*’s publication on 12 July of Trotsky’s article, “Vodka, the Church, and Cinema,” in which Trotsky emphasized the danger of raising income through vodka revenues. On the same day, the Politburo passed a resolution suggesting that *Pravda* withhold publication of articles discussing the question of the sale of vodka.

In a note to the Politburo on 15 July, Preobrazhensky, a member of *Pravda*’s editorial board, asked the Politburo to cancel this resolution, since “no new resolution on the return to vodka sales can be passed without a thorough and public discussion of the issue, and without a solid majority in the party being in favor of this measure.”⁷ Two weeks later, however, the Politburo passed a resolution on “the inexpediency” of a party-wide discussion of the question. Preobrazhensky’s letter was declared to be “improper in tone and impermissible in content,” while

Preobrazhensky himself was removed from the editorial board of *Pravda*. Simultaneously, in the absence of Bukharin, who was the editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, a new editorial board was appointed.

These decisions were just some of the arbitrary uses of power by Stalin, who took advantage of the fact that part of the Politburo was on leave in Kislovodsk. In response to these actions, Zinoviev and Bukharin sent an entire series of letters from Kislovodsk to Moscow. With regard to Preobrazhensky's removal from *Pravda*, Bukharin sent a sharp letter to Kamenev, in which he said:

One cannot trifle with people in that manner, even if they are incorrect. We will make a heap of dissatisfied persons, and that is tolerable only for the time being. Lenin is not among us at the moment. People will stop believing us. The question should have been negotiated twenty times before a decision was reached.⁸

Zinoviev's letter to Kamenev was even sharper and more agitated in tone. He recounted numerous examples of Stalin single-handedly appointing his own henchmen to positions and expressed his indignation at the replacement of the editorial board at *Pravda*; he also rebuked Kamenev for allowing Stalin to treat other Politburo members "openly with contempt" and to decide the most important questions without eliciting their agreement. Zinoviev's letter concluded with the following words:

We *will not* stand for this any longer. If the party is predestined to pass through a phase (probably very short) of Stalin's personal rule, then so be it. However, I, at least, do not intend to conceal all of these swinish tricks. When the "troika" is discussed in the various platforms, it is assumed that I play a not unimportant role. In fact, however, there is no troika at all, but only Stalin's dictatorship. Ilyich was correct a thousand times over. If we do not discover a *serious* solution to this problem, then a period of struggle is inevitable. Of course this is not news to you. On many occasions you have said the same thing yourself. But what has surprised me is that Voroshilov, Frunze, and Sergo (Ordzhonikidze) think nearly the same way.²

From this letter it follows that by that time Zinoviev believed, first of all, that the "troika" was essentially disintegrating and being replaced by Stalin's personal dictatorship. Second, Zinoviev apparently thought that

Stalin's "personal rule" was a "short phase" and that they would manage to pass through it soon. Third, Zinoviev found that his indignation over Stalin's behavior was shared not only by Kamenev and Frunze, but also by Stalin's closest friends, Ordzhonikidze and Voroshilov.

In July and August 1923, while on leave in Kislovodsk, Central Committee members Zinoviev, Bukharin, Yevdokimov, Voroshilov, Frunze, Lashevich, and Ordzhonikidze made an attempt to limit the excessive growth of Stalin's power. Together they organized a "private meeting" to discuss the question of collective leadership, and how to put in order the work of the leading organs of the party in Lenin's absence. Their goal, as they said, was "to have a certain balance of power and to avoid major political mistakes ..."¹⁰

Zinoviev and Bukharin, who by that time already knew of Lenin's "Testament," proposed two alternate plans for limiting Stalin's power. The first plan amounted to creating a new Secretariat, which would include Stalin, Trotsky, and one of three others: Zinoviev, Kamenev, or Bukharin. Through this new arrangement the Secretariat would be transformed into "something like a small Politburo." The second plan proposed transforming the Secretariat into an organ which would be subordinate to the Politburo. Having been informed of these plans, Kamenev supported them and expressed his hope that Stalin, "after thundering a bit," would also agree with them.¹¹

However, as Ordzhonikidze soon reported, after he had conveyed these proposals to Stalin, the latter interpreted them "as the appointment of political commissars, and, of course, reacted accordingly."¹² Stalin's reaction found expression in a letter to Bukharin and Zinoviev, where he rebuked them for "not objecting, apparently, to the preparation of a breakup."¹³ "One of two things," Stalin asserted. "*Either* we are talking about replacing the Secretary immediately, *or* people want to place a special political commissar above the Secretary."¹⁴

In their reply to Stalin, Zinoviev and Bukharin wrote:

In Moscow we frequently carried on discussions with you, but it was difficult to do so because of your irritability. We had been dissatisfied for a long time,

but while still in Moscow we deliberately decided: first we will rest, then everyone's nerves will calm down, and then we will raise the issue.

Zinoviev formulated the essence of the situation which was disturbing them in the following way:

Ilyich is no longer at the helm. Therefore the Secretariat of the CC *objectively* (without your malicious desires)... *in practice decides everything* (not formally). This is a fact, which cannot be denied. No one wants to install political commissars ... But the *genuine* (and not fictitious) existence of a "group," and *equal* collaboration and responsibility under the present regime is *impossible*.¹⁵

In this way, Zinoviev reduced the shortcomings of the "regime" merely to the absence of "equal collaboration" within the "group," but not to the absence of elections to leading organs of the party in accordance with the Party Statutes. He saw Stalin's violation of the unity of this factional group in the emergence of "absurd debates" with the Leningrad City Committee that "already have all the Trotskyists talking."¹⁶

At the same time, Zinoviev attempted "to reach an understanding" with Trotsky by sending Serebriakov to him with a proposal to turn the "troika" [group of three] into a "piatyorka" [group of five] by including Trotsky and Bukharin. Trotsky harshly rejected this proposal, declaring:

After all, we have a Politburo of the Central Committee. If Zinoviev wants to establish normal relations, then it is necessary to eliminate both the "troika" and the "piatyorka."¹⁷

Having received such a categorical response from Trotsky to his proposal for creating a new combination at the top, Zinoviev reconciled himself to Stalin's rejection of his plans. He returned to negotiations with Stalin, the result of which was the decision "not to touch the Secretariat," but to limit themselves to introducing Trotsky, Bukharin, and Zinoviev into the Orgburo for the purpose of "coordinating administrative and political work." This proposal, however, which essentially changed nothing in the structure of power, was never implemented.

After achieving this agreement, the "troika" closed ranks again and stepped up their factional, conspiratorial activity against Trotsky.

According to the recollections of Bazhanov, who was in charge of keeping records in the Politburo, in 1923, prior to meetings of the Politburo that took place two to three times per week, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin gathered, as a rule, at first in Zinoviev's apartment, then later in Stalin's office:

This meeting of the troika is a true session of the secret government, deciding, or, to be more correct, pre-deciding all the important questions of the day ... Formally the troika decides whether to raise a given question at a session of the Politburo, or to direct it elsewhere. In reality, the members of the troika reach an agreement on how a given question will be decided at the next day's meeting of the Politburo; they then think over the decision, and even determine which role each member will play when discussing the question at tomorrow's session ... At the meeting on the following day there will be a discussion, followed by resolutions; but all the important issues are discussed here, in a closed circle; the discussion is candid, held among themselves (there is nothing to be shy about among themselves) and between the real holders of power.¹⁸

1. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 77 ["On the So-Called 'Sultan-Galiev Counter-Revolutionary Organization,'" *Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, p. 77].

2. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 260 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 778].

3. *Четвертое совещание ЦК РКП(б) по национальному вопросу*, М., 1923, С. 61 [*Fourth Conference of the CC VKP(b) on the National Question*, Moscow, 1923, p. 61].

4. Там же, С. 232–233 [Ibid., pp. 232–233].

5. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1989, № 7, С. 123–124 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1989, № 7, pp. 123–124].

6. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 200 ["G. Ye. Zinoviev to I. V. Stalin," 31 July 1923, *Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 200].

7. Там же, С. 193 [Ibid., p. 193].

8. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 197 ["N. I. Bukharin to L. B. Kamenev," no earlier than 30 July 1923, *Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 197].

9. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 198 ["G. Ye. Zinoviev to L. B. Kamenev," 30 July 1923, *Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 198].

10. *Четырнадцатый съезд ВКП(б)*, С. 455 [*Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, p. 455].

11. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 205 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 4, p. 205].

12. Там же, С. 201 [Ibid., "G. K. Ordzhonikidze to K. Ye. Voroshilov," 3 August 1923, p. 201].

- [13.](#) Там же, С. 202 [Ibid., “I. V. Stalin to N. I. Bukharin and G. Ye. Zinoviev,” 3 August 1923, p. 202].
- [14.](#) Там же, С. 203 [Ibid., “I. V. Stalin to G. Ye. Zinoviev,” 7 August 1923, p. 203].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 205–206 [Ibid., “G. Ye. Zinoviev and N. I. Bukharin to I. V. Stalin,” 10 August 1923, p. 205–206].
- [16.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [17.](#) *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 34 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 5, p. 34].
- [18.](#) Бажанов, Б., *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, М., 1990, С. 149 [B. Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, М., 1990, p. 149].



Deni's depiction of Trotsky in 1919 slaying the dragon of counter-revolution

14. Trotsky Goes on the Offensive

While preoccupied mainly with consolidating their own positions and with the administrative reshuffling of cadre, members of the triumvirate overlooked the serious economic and political processes that had matured in both the party and the country.

In the fall of 1923, an ever-increasing discrepancy between the “scissors” of prices was discovered: the price index on manufactured goods reached 187 percent, while the price index on agricultural goods attained merely 58 percent of the pre-war level. Such a disparity between prices presaged a crisis for the market; because of the growing excess of manufactured wares, it became difficult for the managers of industrial enterprises to find the funds necessary to pay the salaries of their workers on a regular basis. This situation, naturally, created dissatisfaction among workers. From the summer of 1923, several strike waves swept through major industrial cities like Moscow, Kharkov, and Sormovo. According to statistics of the OGPU, in October of 1923, the maximum number of strikes reached 217, with 165,000 workers participating in them. Within the party, illegal groups, although small in number, became active: “Workers’ Truth,” which had formed in the spring of 1921, and the “Workers’ Group of the Russian Communist Party,” which arose in the spring and summer of 1923.

A resolution of the Politburo on 18 September formed a commission made up of Dzerzhinsky (the chairman), Zinoviev, Rykov, Molotov, Stalin, and Tomskey in order to analyze both the economic and inner-party situation. The results of the commission’s work were announced at

a plenum of the Central Committee that convened on 23 September. The conclusions of the commission were reduced to an expression of alarm over the appearance of illegal groups within the party, the participation of many party members in strikes, and the passive attitude on the part of many Communists to these phenomena. In his speech to the Central Committee, Dzerzhinsky associated these negative tendencies with the unhealthy character of the inner-party regime. He emphasized that the stagnation in the inner life of the party and the prevalence of appointments over elections were becoming a political danger and paralyzing the party.

To overcome the sharply evident economic and political difficulties, the September Plenum limited itself to creating three new commissions (on the inner-party situation, on the “scissors,” and on wages) and declared that participation in “Workers’ Truth” and the “Workers’ Group of the RKP” was incompatible with membership in the party.

Trotsky, who returned from Kislovodsk for the September Plenum, felt that the situation which had developed in both the party and the country had deteriorated sharply. He considered the findings of the Dzerzhinsky commission to be unsatisfactory. He was especially disturbed by the commission’s proposal to require party members who learned of the existence of emerging groupings in the party to report the information immediately to the GPU, the CC, and the CCC. Trotsky considered the proposal to be a symptom that the situation in the party was changing for the worse.

The other significant development, which prompted Trotsky to carry the inner-party struggle beyond the limits of the Politburo, was an attempt made at the September Plenum to place severe controls on Trotsky’s activity as leader of the military. For this purpose, the plenum considered a proposal, adopted by the “troika” at a secret meeting, to broaden the membership of the Revolutionary Military Council [RMC] to include Stalin and his close supporters, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze, as well as Zinoviev’s supporter, Lashevich.

Trotsky declared that he saw the proposal as a new link in the chain of secret intrigues that were directed against him; having refused to take

part in discussions of such a question, Trotsky left the conference hall. After this incident, the plenum sent Kuibyshev to negotiate with him. Trotsky asked Kuibyshev:

Is it not outrageous for you to insist that I participate in a discussion in which no one presents the real arguments, although everyone knows them?

According to Trotsky, the proposal to change the make-up of the Revolutionary Military Council was part of “a systematic policy being conducted from day to day that was intended to blockade and isolate those party officials who do not feel that the existing party regime is healthy and correct.”¹

Expressed in such a resolute manner, Trotsky’s protest against the reorganization of the Revolutionary Military Council kept the Central Committee plenum from immediately carrying out the proposed measures to their full extent. However, the resolution accepted in principle the addition to the RMC of the “military members of the Central Committee”; two of them, moreover, — Lashevich and Voroshilov — were added immediately. The plenum also resolved to attach to the chair of the RMC a special executive organ, which would include Stalin.

The attempts of the plenum to solve the critical problems of the country’s economic life and of the inner-party situation by bureaucratic methods were the last straw that forced Trotsky, finally, to take more decisive steps in order “to prompt the Central Committee, in accordance with all aspects of the present situation, to formulate and resolve the most critical and pressing issues of our inner life in a different way.”² At a Politburo session after the September Plenum, Trotsky pointed to the necessity of taking “exceptional measures, in both the economic and inner-party spheres,” in order to heal the serious situation in the party and in the country.

The only response to Trotsky’s statement came from Rykov, who proposed to summon a “private meeting of the Politburo,” which in fact was never summoned, in spite of a note from Trotsky agreeing to such a meeting. Having failed to receive a response to his note, Trotsky

concluded that “the members of the Politburo have refused the opportunity, which they themselves offered, to discuss the most important questions that I raised concerning our inner-party crisis.”³ Only after this did Trotsky send his letter of 8 October to the Central Committee, which extended the inner-party struggle beyond the bounds of the Politburo for the first time.

In the opening sections of the letter, Trotsky addressed the reasons for both the economic crisis that had arisen in the country and its socioeconomic consequences. Trotsky believed that the primary cause of the crisis was the failure to implement the fundamental principles of the New Economic Policy as outlined in the resolution on industry at the Twelfth Party Congress. Having usurped the decision of all economic questions, the Politburo examined these principles too hastily and outside of their connection with a planned economy. Attempts “to control prices by command as done under war communism,” that is, to administratively change them in a mechanical fashion, had led to an enormous widening of the “scissors,” or the discrepancy between the prices of industrial and agricultural goods. This phenomenon, in Trotsky’s view, was “tantamount to the liquidation of NEP, for, when it came to the peasant — the foundation of NEP — he does not care why he cannot make purchases: whether it is because trade is forbidden by decrees, or simply because two boxes of matches cost the same as a pood [roughly sixteen kilos] of bread.”⁴ Trotsky considered another “menacing symptom” to be the attempt “to build a budget on the sale of vodka,” that is, the attempt to reduce the state budget deficit by encouraging the trade of strong alcoholic beverages. Trotsky emphasized that the attempt by the Politburo majority to turn opposition to this measure practically into a crime against the party, and the removal of Preobrazhensky from the editorial board of *Pravda*, “will always remain one of the most shameful moments in the history of our party.”⁵

While examining the problems of the inner-party regime, Trotsky wrote:

The Tenth Party Congress was conducted under the banner of workers' democracy. Many speeches made at that time in defense of workers' democracy seemed to me exaggerated and largely demagogic in view of the incompatibility of complete, fully-developed democracy with a regime of dictatorship. But, it was absolutely clear that the repressive epoch of war communism must give way to a period with a broader and more lively party community. Yet the regime which had basically developed prior to the Twelfth Congress, and then after the congress which had consolidated and assumed its final form, is in fact much further from workers' democracy than the regime of the most severe periods of war communism.⁶

Trotsky emphasized that even during the most difficult period of the civil war, discussions of the most pressing questions — including even questions of military policy — were held in both party organizations and the party press; now, however, the open exchange of opinions on questions of serious concern to the party has ceased. The system of appointing party officials had become more widespread than ever before. The bureaucratization of the party apparatus, which had developed to an unprecedented degree thanks to the secretarial appointment of bureaucrats, and the suppression of freedom of expression in the party, were closely bound to one another.

The self-reliant character of the secretarial hierarchy had revealed itself, Trotsky explained, in the appointment of regional secretaries, which placed the latter in a position that was essentially independent of the local party organization. When confronted by opposition, criticism, or dissatisfaction, the regional party secretary, relying upon the center for support, merely transferred the necessary cadres. In turn, the center evaluated all the appointments, removals, and replacements of party members “primarily from the standpoint of their potential either to cooperate or oppose the inner-party regime, which invisibly, unofficially, but nonetheless actually operates within the Orgburo and the Secretariat.”⁷ Therefore, Trotsky noted, the official motives for the appointments, removals, and transfers to other positions “by no means always coincide with the real motives and interests of the matter at hand; as a result, the party is broken-down.”⁸

In Trotsky's view, this "break-down" manifested itself, on the one hand, in a particular type of bureaucratic psychology which had appeared over the last year and a half. "The central feature of this psychology," he claimed, "is the conviction that the secretary is capable of solving each and every question, without even being familiar with the essence of the matter at hand." Not infrequently, communists who had not yet demonstrated essential political and professional skills in soviet work, began imperiously to solve economic, military, and other problems as soon as they reached the post of party secretary. As a result, trustworthy and competent guidance was replaced by one which issued "formal orders merely for the purpose of eliciting the passive discipline of each and everyone."⁹

On the other hand, those party functionaries who willingly resort to the use of command and administrative methods of leadership "flatly refuse to have their own opinions, at least those which are expressed openly; it's as though they think that the secretarial hierarchy is the apparatus that creates party opinion and party decisions. Beneath this layer of those abstaining from their own opinions lies the broad layer of the party masses, to whom every decision is presented in the form of a summons or command."¹⁰

Formulating a constructive program for a fundamental change in the party regime, Trotsky wrote:

Secretarial bureaucratism must be ended. Party democracy, at least within limits without which the party would be threatened by ossification and degeneration, must come into its own. The rank and file members of the party must indicate, within the framework of party-mindedness, what they are dissatisfied with, and they must also receive the real opportunity, in accordance with party statutes and, most importantly, with all the spirit of our party, to create its organizational apparatus.¹¹

At the end of his letter, Trotsky recalled that, while fighting with full resolve and determination within the Central Committee against the incorrect policy of its majority, he resolutely refused to present this struggle to the judgment of even a narrow circle of comrades who did not hold positions in higher party organs. However, having tried over a year

and a half to discuss and resolve differences within the Central Committee, and to create a healthy political atmosphere both in the Central Committee and in the Politburo, there were no results. The continuation of such tactics under conditions of the unceasing increase in the number of errors committed by the majority of the Central Committee “threatens that the party might be taken by surprise with a crisis of exceptional gravity; and in such a situation, the party would have the right to charge any member who foresaw the approaching crisis, but failed to name it openly, with raising form above content.” Proceeding from these considerations, Trotsky unambiguously declared that he now considered it to be

not only my right, but also my duty to say what is, to every party member whom I consider sufficiently prepared, mature, firm in character and, consequently, able to help the party to emerge from the impasse, without factional convulsions and shocks.¹²

Trotsky's letter immediately raised concern in the ranks of the ruling faction, who feared that its contents might become known to broad circles of the party. The majority of the Politburo therefore appealed to Trotsky to postpone the circulation of his letter, even to members of the CC and the CCC. Although Trotsky agreed to this request, meetings of both the Presidium of the CCC and the bureau of the Moscow Party Committee were called a few days later. Resolutions passed at these meetings stated that Trotsky's letter was a platform aimed at creating a faction; moreover, a proposal was made not to hold a wide party debate over Trotsky's letter, but to limit its discussion at the next plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission.

1. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 40 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 5, p. 40].

2. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 7, С. 175 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 7, “Letter of L. D. Trotsky to the Presidium of the CCC and the Politburo of the CC RKP(b),” 19 October 1923, p. 175].

3. Там же [Ibid.].

4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 167 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 5, “Letter of L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and the CCC RKP(b),” 8 October 1923, p. 167].

- [5.](#) Там же, С. 170–171 [Ibid., pp. 170–171].
- [6.](#) Там же, С. 169–170 [Ibid., pp. 169–170].
- [7.](#) Там же, С. 169 [Ibid., p. 169].
- [8.](#) Там же, С. 173 [Ibid., p. 173].
- [9.](#) Там же, С. 169, 172 [Ibid., pp. 169, 172].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 170 [Ibid., p. 170].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 173 [Ibid., p. 173].
- [12.](#) Там же [Ibid.].



Lev Davidovich Trotsky
(1879–1940)

15. Counter-Attack

An important change in the situation that had been created occurred on 15 October 1923, when the Politburo was presented with “The Declaration of the Forty-Six.” It bore this title because forty-six party members who had joined the party prior to 1917 signed the declaration. As in Trotsky’s letter, within this document it is not difficult to discern similarities with Lenin’s ideas of “political reform.” In the “Declaration of the Forty-Six,” however, the issues of reforming the inner-party regime and struggling against bureaucratism of the apparatus are addressed more broadly and sharply than in Lenin’s last works, insofar as the authoritarian-bureaucratic tendencies in party life had increased substantially over the several months following Lenin’s departure from the party leadership. The declaration read:

Under the guise of official unity, we actually have a one-sided direction of activity and a one-sided selection of personnel, who are capable of adapting to the views and sympathies of a narrow circle. As a result of the party leadership being distorted by such narrow considerations, the party has, to a significant degree, ceased to be that living, independent collective which is sensitive to the changes in living reality, precisely because it is connected by thousands of threads to this reality. Instead of this, we observe an ever progressing, barely disguised division of the party into a secretarial hierarchy and into “laymen,” into professional party functionaries, chosen from above, and the remaining party masses, who take no part in social life.”¹

The “Declaration of the Forty-Six” described in expressive terms both the unhealthy atmosphere within the party and the mechanisms for the

bureaucratic selection of cadres, which were undermining the statutory principles and norms of party life.

Members of the party who are dissatisfied with this or that directive from the CC or even a provincial committee, or who are plagued by doubts, or who have noted “to themselves” various mistakes, things out of line or disorder of some sort — such members are afraid to speak about this at party meetings, or, even worse, are afraid to talk to one another unless their interlocutor is considered to be absolutely reliable and not a “gossip.” Free discussion within the party has virtually disappeared, and party public opinion has been stifled. Now it is neither the party nor its broad masses who nominate and choose provincial conferences and party congresses, which in turn nominate and elect provincial committees and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. On the contrary, it is the secretarial hierarchy, the party hierarchy, which to an ever greater degree chooses the delegates to the conferences and congresses, which, then, to an even greater degree are now becoming the executive conferences of this hierarchy.²

In order to characterize the situation which had developed in the party, the authors of the “Declaration” used the term “regime of factional dictatorship within the party.” This regime, in their opinion, formed after the Tenth Party Congress. From the very beginning, the authors emphasized, several of them reacted negatively to the “dictatorship within the party,” while others consciously adopted a position of “non-resistance” to the new regime, believing that the turn toward NEP, as well as Lenin’s illness, justified the regime as a temporary measure. They all agreed, however, that by the Twelfth Party Congress the regime had outlived itself and had become completely intolerable:

It is killing the independent initiative of the party and substituting for the party a selected bureaucratic apparatus which functions smoothly in normal times, but which inevitably misfires in moments of crisis.³

The “Declaration of the Forty-Six” also stated that the bureaucratic apparatus was constraining the independent activity of the party and turning into a means for carrying out factional policies, for aggressively suppressing any dissenting views or any disagreement with a position of the majority in the Politburo and the Central Committee.

The authors also detected a serious threat in the absence of a truly ideological and effective unity in the party,

In the party, the more silently and secretly the struggle is waged, the more ferocious it becomes. If we raise this question before the Central Committee, then it is precisely in order to find the swiftest and most painless resolution of the contradictions that are tearing the party apart.⁴

The solution lay in the replacement of the regime of factional dictatorship with a regime of comradely unity and inner-party democracy. The authors proposed as the first and most urgent step to summon a meeting of the members of the CC with those Communists whose views on the situation in the party and in the country differed from those of the CC majority.

However, such a development of events did not at all suit the ruling clique. Having run up against an active and influential opposition to its policy, they immediately began to take measures designed to transform this opposition into a “faction.” For this purpose, a session of the CCC Presidium, together with twenty-six “available” members and candidate-members of the CCC (of the sixty elected at the Twelfth Congress), was convened on 17 October. This conference, to which Trotsky was not invited, discussed reports on his letter by Kuibyshev and Yaroslavsky. A decree was passed confirming the resolution by the Presidium of the Central Control Commission. However, the results of the voting showed that wished-for complete unanimity among the conference participants had not been achieved: eighteen voted in favor of the resolution, four voted against, and four abstained (members of the CCC Presidium did not participate in the voting).

The following day the Politburo made the decision to call an emergency united plenum of the CC and CCC, to which the local bureaucratic leaders, “representatives of the ten largest party organizations,” were invited.

The majority of members and candidate-members of the Politburo prepared for this meeting a response to Trotsky’s letter of 8 October. They discussed his “monstrous errors” at great length, while interpreting his letter as an attempt “to attack the CC” and as a signal to form a faction

directed against “the fundamental cadres of the party.” The authors of the response insisted that Trotsky’s critical remarks were motivated by his thirst for personal power; moreover, they asserted:

At the root of all of comrade Trotsky’s dissatisfaction, all of his irritation, all of his statements against the CC, which have continued for several years now, as well as his resoluteness to shake up the party, lies comrade Trotsky’s desire to be appointed by the CC ... to direct our economic life.⁵

Several days later, Trotsky sent a letter to the CC and CCC with an extensive analysis of the charges made against him in the response of the Politburo. Trotsky indicated that the authors of the response, instead of addressing the principled questions he had raised about the party crisis, had formally charged him with creating a factional platform. In this connection, Trotsky emphasized that, from the Tenth Congress warning about the danger of factions (of organized groups within the party), “it is still a long way to labelling as a faction any attempt by an individual party member, or group of members, to direct the attention of the CC to the incorrectness and error of a given policy. There is nothing more dangerous than taking to a bureaucratic absurdity a resolution prohibiting the creation of factional organizations within the party.”⁶

Trotsky also attempted to prove, although rather cautiously, that the charges of factionalism leveled by the Politburo majority against those holding different views in fact concealed the Politburo’s own factional activity:

A truly non-factional regime in the party will not disintegrate only ... if the leading institutions themselves do not conduct a policy of secret, factional selection, and only if they pay the closest attention to the voice of inner-party criticism without attempting to liquidate any independent thought in the party with charges of factionalism.⁷

While examining the numerous misrepresentations and distortions of his views, Trotsky called “one of the most fantastic accusations against me, which more than once has been hinted at or stated behind my back, and now is finally stated openly,” was that he “underestimated” the peasantry. Citing numerous facts and documents that had characterized his true relationship to the peasantry (including those proposals which

he made to the Central Committee in the spring of 1920 that anticipated the introduction of NEP), Trotsky concluded that “the unsubstantiated, clearly fabricated assertions regarding my supposedly incorrect line on the peasant question” constituted “an artificially created legend for the justification of the barriers that are being erected within the party.”⁸

One month later, Trotsky’s article “On the Smychka [Alliance] (More Precisely: On the Smychka and False Rumors)” appeared in *Pravda*, where he revealed to the entire party the provocative character of such accusations. He wrote:

Several times already in recent months, party comrades have asked me to explain what, in particular, are my views on the peasant question, and how exactly do they differ from those of Lenin. Other comrades have posed the question more precisely and concretely: “Is it true,” they have asked, “that I ‘underestimate’ the peasantry and its role in our economic development, and thereby, it follows, I fail to attach the proper significance to the economic and political alliance [smychka] between the proletariat and the peasantry?” Comrades have been asking such questions to me both orally and in writing. “And where did you get that idea?” I asked with great surprise. “On which facts do you base such a conclusion?” “That’s just it,” they answer in such cases, “we don’t know any facts, we merely hear rumors.”

At first I did not attach much significance to such exchanges. But a new letter I have received on this topic has forced me to think over the issue. Where do these rumors come from? Then completely by chance I recalled that such rumors circulated all over our Soviet land four to five years ago. At the time, the rumor was simpler: “Lenin is for the peasantry, but Trotsky against.”

Having reminded his readers of statements he and Lenin had made on this issue in 1919, Trotsky added:

However, rumors, as we see, are tenacious. In this respect, there is even a French proverb: “Slander and keep slandering, for something will always stick.”⁹

1. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 6, С. 190 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 6, “Declaration of the Forty-Six to the Politburo of the CC RKP(b),” 15 October 1923, p. 190].

2. Там же [Ibid.].

3. Там же [Ibid.].

4. Там же, С. 191 [Ibid., p. 191].

5. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 7, С. 179 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 7, “Response of Members of the Politburo of the CC RKP(b) to the Letter from L. D. Trotsky of 8 October 1923,” 19 October 1923, p. 179].
6. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 167 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, “Letter from L. D. Trotsky to Members of the CC and CCC RKP(b),” 23 October 1923, p. 167].
7. Там же, С. 167–168 [*Ibid.*, pp. 167–168].
8. Там же, С. 174–175 [*Ibid.*, pp. 174–175].
9. *Правда*, 1923, 6 декабря [*Pravda*, 6 December 1923. Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The New Course*, New Park Publications, 1972, pp. 80–81]. The French proverb is: “Calomniez, calomniez, il en restera quelque chose.”

16. The Struggle Continues

On 25 October 1923, a joint plenum was convened of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, together with the representatives of ten provincial organizations. Until recently, the work of this three-day plenum has not been studied, since all the material related to it has been kept in closed party archives and thus remained unavailable to historians. Even the most substantial biographies of Trotsky, written by Isaac Deutscher and by Pierre Broué, claim that Trotsky did not attend this plenum due to illness. Meanwhile, as it became clear from the first publications on the work of the plenum, Trotsky attended all its sessions, spoke at them four times, and participated in the voting, which, at his request, was a roll-call vote. On 25 October, Trotsky delivered a report right after a report by Stalin. Late in the evening on 26 October, following the conclusion of the discussion period, both speakers (first Trotsky, then Stalin) delivered concluding speeches.

At present we now have the abstracts of both concluding speeches recorded by Bazhanov in short-hand, as well as the version of Trotsky's concluding speech which Bazhanov edited on the basis of its original rough draft. Trotsky's speech was a direct response to the charges made by other speakers and in the draft resolution presented to the plenum, which expressed the position of the "troika."

The very fact that he sent a letter to the CC was explained by Trotsky: "Within the Politburo there is another Politburo," which had virtually excluded him from taking part in deciding basic economic and political

questions. In addition, there were attempts to isolate Trotsky completely by surrounding him with people who actively opposed him, while at the same time removing so-called “Trotskyists.” In speaking about the content of this word, which was being circulated widely by the triumvirate and its supporters (the word “Trotskyism” was not yet used at that time), Trotsky explained that people who did not actively speak out against him were called “Trotskyists.”

For I know of no other explanation of what a “Trotskyist” might be. I have never carried beyond the walls of the CC any differences that existed within it; I have never communicated them to party comrades or attempted to unite them; and I have never attempted to organize a group or a faction.

Meanwhile, in the recent period, there had been a number of transfers and dismissals of so-called “Trotskyists,” primarily from leading military organs. “Any official who works with me, and simply, without any group or political considerations, but who merely is able to work with me, has now come under suspicion of being a ‘Trotskyist.’”¹ The persecution of “Trotskyists” was never stopped by the Central Control Commission, the higher-ups of which had become a weapon of the Secretariat of the CC in the inner-party struggle.

In the concluding part of his speech, Trotsky tried to appeal to the reason and conscience of the conference delegates. With the utmost openness and undisguised pain, he spoke both of the unbearable conditions under which the Politburo majority had placed him, and of the serious consequences for the fate of the party that the acceptance of the resolution now before the plenum might entail:

Comrades, I will speak frankly. There are comrades in our Politburo who wish to go all the way with this affair, that is, to steadily deepen the differences that already exist. They are striving ... to make further joint work impossible.

I think that the majority of the CC and the party do not want this. But the one-sided resolution which is being prepared here for you to pass ... will provide support for those who wish to destroy the basis for future joint, collective work.

Comrades, before voting for the draft resolution, try to think through and understand my situation. ... Comrades, I was in a desperate and difficult situation, indeed a truly tragic situation. At that time, as this net was

ensnaring me, I was unable to explain anything, or reveal to anyone the real truth; I was unable to engage in battle. But the net had to be torn open ...

Think, comrades, before making your decision. If you choose the path which you seem to want to take, then you will make an enormous mistake.²

Stalin spoke after Trotsky. As far as one may judge by the rough draft of the transcript, Stalin's speech was characterized by extreme demagoguery and innumerable misrepresentations. With regard to Trotsky's words that, on the national question in the Politburo, "there had been differences not only pertaining to the persecution of individual officials, but also on the principled side of the issue," Stalin hypocritically declared: "I don't understand — there were no major differences."³ Stalin's explanation of the reason for vacillation among Politburo members over publishing Lenin's article on Rabkrin was even more Pharisaical. He explained that in this article "there were three references to the danger of a split," whereas there was not "even a shadow of disagreement" in the Politburo. Therefore, members of the Politburo "feared that the party would be disoriented."⁴

To Trotsky's declaration that the economic crisis could be explained by the leadership's lack of planning, as well as its inability to handle the chaos of the market, Stalin countered: "Crises are a necessary element of the NEP. You (i.e., Trotsky and the Group of Forty-Six – V. R.) do not understand the NEP. You began to wail at the first sign of a problem. And things will get worse ... You won't fix things by improving Gosplan."⁵

Stalin characterized the limitations on inner-party democracy as "a system of measures for protecting the party from the influence of the NEP." He declared party discussions to be extremely dangerous, insofar as they supposedly undermined the confidence of workers and peasants in the party and nourished ideas among enemies that the party was weak. Therefore, "to concoct discussions now is criminal."⁶

Taking advantage of the fact that the majority of the plenum's participants had no knowledge of Trotsky's fruitless attempts to settle differences within the Politburo and the CC, Stalin demagogically alleged that "if Trotsky had exhausted all the legal possibilities of correcting the

‘mistakes’ of the CC, then he would be correct and would be obliged to appeal directly to party members over the heads of the CC. But he has made no such attempts. This is the essence of the question which has brought us together here.” Proceeding from similar false premises, Stalin charged the “Group of Forty-Six” “with employing means not allowed by the party and with turning to party members over the head of the CC.”² In actual fact, both Trotsky’s letter and the “Declaration of the Forty-Six” were addressed specifically to the CC with the primary purpose of initiating a meeting of the CC with Communists holding dissenting views in order to discuss the issues in dispute.

As the finale in his speech, Stalin attempted to define Trotsky’s letter as a step that had created “a situation which threatens us with a split.” Stalin demanded “a secure set of procedures through which all differences in the future will be resolved within a collegium and not be carried beyond it.”⁸ Thus the main goal of Stalin’s speech was to prevent the party from becoming familiar with the serious differences that had emerged, and to forbid a general party discussion of the questions at issue.²

Supported by the obedient majority at the plenum, the ruling faction managed to defeat the draft resolutions of Nikolai Goncharov and Preobrazhensky that were aimed at a constructive resolution of the problems at hand and a search for a compromise between the Politburo majority and the “opposition.” The basis of the resolution finally passed at the plenum was another draft presented by one of the rank-and-file participants in the meeting, CCC candidate-member Andrei Radchenko. This resolution, which would exert an enormous influence on the future course of the inner-party struggle, was concealed from the party. The first reference to it was made by Stalin at the Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924, although Stalin publicized only part of the decree. Radchenko’s resolution was first published in full only at the end of 1990.

The resolution of the October plenum consisted of two sections, each of which essentially contradicted the other. Section “B,” which was entitled “On Inner-Party Democracy” and passed unanimously, approved “fully the Politburo’s timely plan for inner-party democracy, as well as its

proposed intensification of the struggle against excesses and against the corrupting influence of the NEP on individual elements in the party.”¹⁰ The resolution thus presented the Politburo as the initiator of a course toward inner-party democracy.

The clause in the resolution calling for an intensification of the struggle against “excesses” had in mind the official circular issued by the CC on 19 October 1923 and distributed to all the party committees. This directive spoke of the inadmissibility of using state resources for the improvement of private residences and of rewards in kind for party officials. The large discrepancy in wages received by “specialists” and party officials, on the one hand, and the remaining masses of average workers, on the other, was no longer to be permitted. The directive also indicated that party officials did not have the right to receive personal wages, bonuses, or overtime pay. This circular turned out to be the final party decision aimed at curbing bureaucratic privileges.

Section “A” of the resolution, “On the Declarations of Comrade Trotsky and Forty-Six Other Comrades,” would have an incomparably greater influence on the subsequent development of party life. Section “A” was passed by a vote of 102–2, with ten abstentions. Trotsky was among the ten who abstained from voting on this particular section.

Point 1 of Section “A,” which essentially defined the attitude toward all subsequent oppositions within the party, stated that “the plenum of the CC, the CCC, and the representatives of the ten largest party organizations ... fully endorses the political line and the practical work of the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat, and considers the response by the majority of Politburo members essentially correct.”¹¹ Over the course of the next sixty years or more, the expression, “fully endorses,” became a mandatory ritualistic formula in resolutions passed at party congresses and CC plenums.

The next two points of the resolution indicated that “the attack by comrade Trotsky upon the Politburo objectively assumed the character of a factional move, which threatens to deliver a blow to the unity of the party and creates a crisis within the party.” Likewise, the resolution described the “Declaration of the Forty-Six” as a “step in factionally-

divisive politics,” threatening “to place the entire life of the party in the coming months under the sign of an inner-party struggle.”¹²

Point 4 indicated that the plenum considered its “self-apparent duty to guarantee the right of any party member to analyze critically, in accordance with party regulations, both the entire policies of the CC as well as its individual decisions.” (In subsequent “party documents” this right would not even merit a mention). However, right after this point, the resolution called for an obligatory struggle “against factional groupings within the party and their divisive activities.” It expressed “certainty that the CCC, in the interest of the party, would take all necessary measures so that, in the future, the ongoing inner-party struggle would not go beyond the bounds acceptable within the party at the present urgent moment of comradely discussion.”¹³ In this way, the resolution left open the question of where the boundary lay between a critical analysis of CC policies and acceptable discussion of questions under dispute, on the one hand, and the divisive activities of factional groupings on the other.

The remaining points of the resolution declared it the duty of all party officials to offer the CC their “complete trust and unwavering support.” A special point was devoted to Trotsky, who was “earnestly” advised “in the future to participate closely and directly in the practical work of all central party and soviet institutions of which he is a member.”¹⁴ This proposal was utterly hypocritical, for, within the Politburo, “another Politburo” had already emerged, doing everything possible to isolate Trotsky in the leading organs of the party and the state.

Finally, the last point approved the Politburo’s refusal to submit disputed questions to a party-wide discussion. In developing this line, the plenum assumed “responsibility to stop the factional discussion that had begun,” and emphasized its confidence that in making this decision, it was expressing “the opinion of the entire party.”¹⁵

What methods were used to pass the resolution can be seen in a letter written by Krupskaya to Zinoviev on 31 October. Although Krupskaya considered herself a supporter of the triumvirate, she felt that the

behavior of the triumvirs at the plenum had created an atmosphere of squabbling and the settling of personal accounts. She wrote:

In this entire scandal — you will agree that the whole incident is a complete disgrace — Trotsky is far from the only one who must be blamed. For all that is taking place, we must also blame our group — you, Stalin, and Kamenev. You could have, of course, but did not wish to prevent this outrage ... That is why everyone was so afraid that this whole squabble will be taken to the masses. The entire incident must be *concealed* from the workers.¹⁶

At the time, concealing political disagreements in the party from rank-and-file communist workers was considered a blatant violation of the norms of party life and of communist political morality.

From Krupskaya's letter it follows that the members of the triumvirate were taking advantage of the fact that a majority of the plenum's participants did not know of the existence of Lenin's "Testament" and several other of Lenin's last documents. They incited their followers to depict Lenin's position in a deliberately false light, and even the reasons for the deterioration of his health. Krupskaya wrote:

The misuse of Ilyich's name that took place at the plenum was also absolutely inadmissible. I can just imagine how indignant he would be if he knew how they abuse his name.

It's a good thing that I was not present when Petrovsky stated that Trotsky is to blame for Ilyich's illness; I would have cried out: that's a lie — Lenin was most upset not by Trotsky, but by the national question and the manners that are becoming established in our upper ranks. You know that Vladimir Ilyich saw the danger of a split not only in the personal qualities of Trotsky, but also in the personal qualities of Stalin and others. And therefore, as you well know, allusions to Ilyich were inadmissible and insincere. They should not have been allowed. They were hypocritical. Personally, those references brought me unbearable pain. I even wondered whether his recovery would really be worthwhile, when his closest comrades in work feel this way about him, take such little account of his opinion, and distort it to such an extent."¹⁷

Believing that the split which Lenin feared so greatly had already appeared at the plenum, Krupskaya unambiguously placed the blame for the split on the triumvirs and called upon them to end the line they had taken of intrigue and divisiveness. She wrote:

And now the main thing. The moment is too serious to arrange a split and make Trotsky's work psychologically impossible. An attempt must be made to come to an agreement with him in a *comradely* manner. Formally now, all the blame for the split is dumped on Trotsky, and I mean dumped, but at the heart of the matter, was Trotsky not driven to this? I don't know the details, but the details are not the issue — one often fails to see the forest for the trees. The main thing is: we must consider Trotsky a force in the party, and then manage to create a situation where this force may be used to the utmost for the party.¹⁸

1. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 34, 36 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 5, pp. 34, 36].

2. Там же, С. 39 [Ibid., p. 39].

3. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 185 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, "Rough Draft of the Transcript of the Concluding Remarks by L. D. Trotsky and I. V. Stalin at the Joint Plenum of the CC and CCC RKP(b)," 26 October 1923, p. 185].

4. Там же [Ibid.].

5. Там же, С. 185–186 [Ibid., pp. 185–186].

6. Там же, С. 186 [Ibid., p. 186].

7. Там же [Ibid.].

8. Там же, С. 187 [Ibid., p. 187].

9. Documents of the discussion preceding the October Plenum of 1923 were not published in the USSR until 1990. However, in May 1924, their basic provisions were made public in the Menshevik émigré journal, *Социалистический вестник* [Socialist Herald].

10. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 10, С. 189 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 10, p. 189].

11. Там же, С. 188 [Ibid., p. 188].

12. Там же, С. 188–189 [Ibid., pp. 188–189].

13. Там же, С. 189 [Ibid., p. 189].

14. Там же [Ibid.].

15. Там же [Ibid.].

16. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 2, С. 201 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 2, "N. K. Krupskaya to G. Ye. Zinoviev," 31 October 1923, p. 201].

17. Там же, С. 202 [Ibid., p. 202].

18. Там же [Ibid.].

17. Two Discussions

The October Plenum failed to achieve its primary goal, stated in a decree, of banning a party-wide discussion. Sensing the negative attitude of the party masses toward the inner-party regime that had developed, and fearing that events could get out of control, the “troika” was forced to open a discussion on inner-party democracy and present itself as its initiator.

On 7 November 1923, Zinoviev published an article in *Pravda*, “The New Tasks of the Party,” in which he said:

In our own inner-party life over the last period, we have undoubtedly observed an inordinate calm, at times even an utter stagnation. ... Our main problem is that nearly all the most important questions come pre-decided from the top down. This process restricts the creativity of the entire membership of the party and reduces the independent activity of the “lower-level” party cells.¹

Pravda promised to launch “the broadest possible discussion” of Zinoviev’s article in both the press and in party organizations. On 13 November, *Pravda* began the discussion in its own pages. In the majority of articles and speeches at meetings organized for the discussion, participants remarked on the unhealthy character of the inner-party regime, the formal nature of party life, and the suppression of independent activity both of party organizations and of rank-and-file party members. At the same time, as far as one may judge by reports in *Pravda*, during the course of the discussion there was an effort made by several bureaucrats [“apparatchiki”] to present the situation as if

“everything is fine in the internal realm of the party, no ‘innovations’ are needed, and there really is nothing to talk about here other than ‘minor flaws in the party mechanism.’”² The reactions to maneuvers of this kind were recorded by *Pravda*’s correspondents: rank-and-file Communists feared that “nothing meaningful will result from carrying the discussion into party cells, especially in the provinces, for they will simply kick out of the party some of the best comrades who have taken part in the discussion, or transfers will begin ‘for administrative reasons.’”³

At meetings organized for the discussion, many party members expressed bewilderment that rank-and-file Communists remained uninformed about the contents of the letters by Trotsky and the “Group of Forty-Six,” as well as the resolutions of the October Plenum pertaining to these documents. An encoded telegram sent to Stalin by the leadership of the Ukrainian Communist Party stated that “the party demands information about the last Plenum. Rank-and-file workers are providing information to the conference based on rumors.”⁴

Rank-and-file Communists did not know that, at the same time as the open discussion on the pages of the press and in party organizations was unfolding, another — secret — discussion was taking place within the Politburo. On 29 November, the Politburo formed a commission consisting of Kamenev, Stalin, and Trotsky, who were ordered to produce a draft resolution on the inner-party situation. The work of this commission proceeded in an atmosphere of sharp disputes between Trotsky on the one hand, and Stalin and Kamenev on the other. A few months later, Kamenev admitted that the resolution was passed “after coarse haggling over every correction. We were forced to yield to those ... formulations and corrections made by Trotsky which seemed necessary for him to be able to sign the resolution along with us, and that we did. Otherwise, comrade Trotsky would not have given us his signature on the resolution about workers’ democracy.”⁵

The character of the disagreements between members of the commission was shown in a special document indicating that Trotsky expressed misgivings as he was working on the resolution. He feared that

the conservatism of the party apparatus and its tendency to employ bureaucratic methods of administration would become a serious obstacle along the way to implementing the new party course. In the future, moreover, authors of collective declarations such as the “Declaration of the Forty-Six,” whose platform was fundamentally correct, would be called factional groupings. In response, Kamenev and Stalin declared that such fears were unfounded; they were certain that the Politburo and the Central Committee would truly guarantee the implementation of “the principles of inner-party democracy from the bottom up.”⁶

As a result, the commission had reached a compromise, and all three members signed the draft of a resolution “On Party-Building.” The draft was then unanimously accepted on 5 December at a joint session of the Politburo and the Presidium of the Central Control Commission. Two days later, the document was published in *Pravda*.

The adoption of the resolution “On Party-Building” was to a significant degree an ideological victory for Trotsky, since its basic propositions repeated (in a somewhat milder form) the ideas contained in his letter and in the “Declaration of the Forty-Six,” which had been condemned so recently at the October Plenum of the CC and CCC.⁷

The resolution began with a section on economics, which approved the ideas presented in Trotsky’s speech at the Twelfth Party Congress: the coordination of the fundamental elements of the state economy both within itself and with the market; the strengthening of the role of Gosplan and the provincial planning organs in managing the economy. This section of the resolution also indicated that the objective contradictions that arose from the existence in the country of different economic structures had been exacerbated by negative tendencies in party policy: by the sharp differences in the material conditions of party members, depending on the various functions they fulfilled, and, especially, by the “excesses” in the material well-being of “the upper echelons”; and by the bureaucratization of the party apparatuses and the subsequent threat that the party would lose contact with the masses.

The resolution emphasized the necessity of establishing a regime of workers’ democracy, which was understood as the freedom for all party

members to discuss openly the most important questions of party life. Moreover, the resolution acknowledged the importance of filling administrative positions and collegia from the bottom up by means of elections. “Only a constant, lively ideological life can preserve the party as it developed before and during the revolution, with a constant and critical study of its past, a correction of its errors, and a collective discussion of the most important questions.”⁸ In the course of these processes, occasional differences would inevitably arise. In order to prevent the development of these differences into factional groupings, the resolution demanded “that the leading organs listen to the voice of the broad party masses; that they avoid interpreting any criticism as factional activity; and, finally, that they not drive well-intentioned and disciplined party comrades in this manner onto the road of insularity and factionalism.”⁹

Noting that the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Congresses had placed a series of limitations on applying the principles of inner-party democracy, the resolution “On Party-Building” recommended a verification of the expediency of several of these limitations, such as the confirmation of secretaries by higher organs. “In any case, we cannot allow the right to approve secretaries to turn into what amounts to their appointment.”¹⁰

Before voting on the resolution, Trotsky announced that he would vote for it only with serious reservations. He noted that the resolution represented a major step away from the present course toward a healthier party regime and that it would facilitate a profound shift in party policy, provided that the Politburo was truly prepared to carry it out. However, he further indicated that the recently adopted resolutions of the October Plenum showed that “a very large and influential grouping (essentially a factional grouping)” within the party apparatus did not desire such a shift toward a new course. Foreseeing that this grouping would evaluate the CC resolution as a maneuver and therefore impede its realization, Trotsky proposed “a substantially clearer, sharper, and more precise condemnation (in the resolution) of the bureaucratized elements in the party apparatus.”¹¹

Trotsky expressed particular alarm at the purely formal position of the remaining Politburo members in their attitude toward groupings and factional formations. He emphasized that the recently discovered factions and groupings within the party had arisen not out of the regime's misapplication of workers' democracy, but rather as the result of the activity of a purely bureaucratic regime. In order to undermine factionalism, it was necessary to strike a blow against bureaucratism.

Trotsky's most essential reservation was expressed in his disagreement with the proposition in the resolution which suggested its continuity with the resolutions adopted at the October Plenum of the Central Committee. That plenum, Trotsky recalled, rejected precisely those ideas which the Politburo now deemed necessary to accept; moreover, it condemned the "factionalism" of the Group of Forty-Six, who had been trying to convince the CC of the need to reject the bureaucratic style of administration. If such methods were to be used in the future, this would radically undermine the new course.

Trotsky's fears were confirmed on the very next day after the adoption of the resolution, when he received a transcript of Stalin's speech at a meeting of party activists from the Krasnopresnensky district in Moscow.¹² Following his speech, Stalin was handed a note that read: "Tell me, is there any basis to the rumor circulating among party members about some kind of letter from comrade Trotsky? What is it about? Enough of secrecy. Tell us about this letter."

Stalin responded to this question in a very distinctive manner. At first he declared that "notwithstanding a desire to do so," he could not report the contents of the letters by Trotsky and the "Group of Forty-Six," since "the October Plenums of the CC and the CCC decided that neither the contents of the letters, nor the demands contained within them, nor the resolution passed by the Plenum of the CC and CCC in October could be reported to the party." Having said this, however, Stalin then provided an interpretation of the Plenum's resolutions, which far exceeded their sharpest formulations in the resolutions, and which was consciously intended to mislead his listeners:

The October Plenum meeting addressed the issue that to cross a certain line in the discussion would mean the formation of a faction and a split in the government. To split the government, in turn, means to destroy Soviet power. ... On this basis the Plenums of the CC and the CCC condemned the comrades.¹³

After receiving reports of Stalin's pronouncements, Trotsky sent the Politburo a statement in which he emphasized that "Comrade Stalin appears to be deciding by himself what should and should not be reported. Moreover, in two different places in his speech, he contradicts himself."¹⁴ On this basis Trotsky requested that the Politburo decide immediately whether or not he had the right, first of all, to respond to the numerous written and oral requests to explain to party members what he had said in his letter, what resolution was passed by the October Plenum, and how it related to the change in the party course expressed in the resolution "On Party-Building."

In explaining what he had done in a statement sent to the Politburo, Stalin resorted to a maneuver that he had often used before and would use again in the future. He admitted his error, and then presented it as a service that he had performed, an act that was aimed at the good of the party. He wrote:

I confess, that by having told the district meeting of Presnia the truth about the resolution passed by the CC and CCC Plenums regarding the declarations of comrade Trotsky and the forty-six, I violated the decree of these Plenums to preserve the secrecy of the resolution. But I was literally forced to take this step because of the pressure exerted by the false rumors undermining the authority of the CC and the CCC, rumors that are being circulated widely among members of the party by those who are hostile to it and wish to destroy it.¹⁵

A resolution passed by the Politburo on 8 December in the same spirit as Stalin's statement acknowledged that Stalin had violated the decree of the October Plenum meeting regarding the secrecy of its resolutions. At the same time, Stalin's action was explained "merely by his desire to properly clarify the true motives of the Plenums of the CC and CCC, thereby improving the party atmosphere in Moscow."¹⁶

At a session of the Politburo where the conflict was discussed, Zinoviev passed the following note to his co-thinkers:

They (Trotsky and his supporters – V. R.) are following all the rules of the factional art. If we do not *immediately* create our own truly solid faction, all will be lost.

I propose that we draw *this* conclusion first of all. I propose that we meet tomorrow (Sunday), specifically to discuss this question, perhaps at Stalin's place outside the city or at my place.

Delay will be fatal.

G. Zinoviev

8.XII.1923¹⁷

On the text of Zinoviev's note, Stalin, Tomsy, Rykov, and Kamenev all indicated their agreement to carry out this plan.

This “exchange of opinions” showed, first of all, how worried the Politburo majority was by the turn that the party-wide discussion might take after publication of the resolution “On Party-Building.” Secondly, when confronted by Trotsky's expressed intention to acquaint the party with the contents of his letter and with all subsequent events in light of the published CC resolution, the Politburo majority moved to create “its own truly solid faction,” while deeply concealing it from the party.

1. *Правда*, 1923, 7 ноября [*Pravda*, 7 November 1923].

2. *Правда*, 1923, 5 декабря [*Pravda*, 5 December 1923].

3. *Правда*, 1923, 12 декабря [*Pravda*, 12 December 1923].

4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 3. С. 203 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 3, p. 203].

5. *Правда*, 1924, 12 января [*Pravda*, 12 January 1924].

6. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 12, С. 170–171 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1990, № 12, pp. 170–171].

[7.](#) The resolution “On Party-Building” was first published, in a significantly abridged form, as a resolution of the Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924. It was then published in its entirety in the stenographic record of the Thirteenth Party Congress in May 1924 as a Congress resolution.

[8.](#) XIII съезд Российской коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет. М., 1963, С. 779 [*Thirteenth Congress of the RKP(b)*. Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1963, p. 779].

[9.](#) Там же, С. 780 [*Ibid.*, p. 780].

[10.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].

[11.](#) Известия ЦК КПСС, 1990, № 12, С. 169 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1990, № 12, “Trotsky’s Letter to the CC,” 9 December 1923, p. 169].

[12.](#) The text of Stalin’s speech (without his responses to the questions) was published on 6 December in *Pravda*. See also: И. Сталин, *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 5, С. 354–370. [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 5, pp. 362–379].

[13.](#) Там же, С. 164–165 [*Ibid.*, pp. 164–165].

[14.](#) Там же, С. 167 [*Ibid.*, pp. 167].

[15.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].

[16.](#) Там же, С. 166 [*Ibid.*, p. 166].

[17.](#) Там же, С. 168 [*Ibid.*, p. 168].

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ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО „КРАСНАЯ НОВЬ“
ГЛАВПОЛИТПРОСВЕТ ♦ МОСКВА ♦ 1924

*A copy of Trotsky's **New Course** from the library of the Lenin Institute. Krupskaya read the booklet to Lenin shortly before his death in January 1924.*

18. “The New Course”

Trotsky had no illusions that his opponents who had voted for the resolution, “On Party-Building,” would refrain from continuing the earlier course of the bureaucratic apparatus. He therefore decided to turn now directly to the party, relying on the fact that the resolution had been accepted unanimously and that party meetings had been called to discuss it. With this in mind, he wrote the article, “The New Course (A Letter to Party Meetings),” which was read on 8 December at several regional meetings of party activists in Moscow, and then sent by Trotsky to *Pravda* for publication. In this article, Trotsky developed the points of his letter from 8 October without mentioning its existence (insofar as mentioning the letter was forbidden by the October Plenum), and placed major emphasis on those parts of the Central Committee’s resolution that had been included at his insistence.

The basic idea of the article was underlined by its very title: it stressed the need for a serious, deep, and radical change of course in the direction of party democracy as the only reliable guarantee against the ominous growth of apparatus bureaucratism and the degeneration of the party’s upper echelons. Trotsky unequivocally gave notice that the real danger of factionalism came not from critics of the “CC’s line,” but from the majority of the Politburo which was propagating “mechanical centralism.” Trotsky stressed:

The new course proclaimed in the CC resolution means that the center of gravity, which was incorrectly shifted in favor of the apparatus under the old course, has now, under the new course, to be shifted in favor of the active element, in favor of independent activity open to criticism, and in favor of the

self-direction of the party. ... In short, our task may be formulated as such: *the party must subordinate to itself its own apparatus ...*¹

It goes without saying that these propositions in Trotsky's article inevitably provoked the discontent of those in the apparatus; they couldn't fail to see the threat to their uncontrolled power over the party. They were particularly enraged by Trotsky's demand to renew the party's apparatus "with the goal of replacing the bureaucratic officialdom with fresh elements who are closely tied to the life of the collective, or who are able to secure such ties. But, first of all, we must drive from their party posts all those elements who, when they hear the first words of criticism, of objection, or of protest, are inclined to demand one's party card as a repressive measure. The new course must begin from the fact that everyone in the apparatus feels, from top to bottom, that no one will dare terrorize the party."²

Feeling that the task of fighting the apparatus bureaucracy was closely tied with the tasks of creating a healthy moral atmosphere in the party and of training the party youth, Trotsky wrote:

Passive obedience, mechanical emulation of one's superiors, lack of personality, servility, careerism, — must be driven out of the party! A Bolshevik is not only a man of discipline, no, he is a person who ... at each step works out his own opinion, and then courageously and independently defends it not only in battle with the enemy, but also within his own organization. Today he happens to be in the minority in his organization. He submits to discipline, because it is his party. But this, of course, does not always mean that he isn't right. Perhaps he only saw or understood a new task or the need to change sooner than others. He firmly raises questions, and not once, but two, three, or ten times. By this he is doing the party a service, helping it to meet the new task fully armed, or to carry out a necessary shift in direction without organizational shocks and factional convulsions.³

Thus, Trotsky was restoring and making public those propositions he had proposed to include in the CC's resolution and which had been rejected by his opponents during its preparation. Naturally, the very fact of writing the article more firmly united the majority of the Politburo, who had decided to reply with what was now a public attack on Trotsky.

Bukharin delayed the publication of the “Letter to Party Meetings” for two days, but nevertheless (apparently after consulting beforehand with the “troika”) was forced to publish it on 11 December. On the very next day, Zinoviev spoke at a meeting of the bureau of the cells of the Moscow party organization; he called for a “rejection” of Trotsky’s article. On the same day a lead article appeared in *Pravda* under the title, “Our Party and Opportunism,” which called Trotsky’s article an anti-party platform. In response to this, Trotsky directed a letter to the Politburo of the CC and the Presidium of the CCC, stressing that the lead article in *Pravda* “was clearly dictated ... by the desire to portray my article as a reason for undermining the unanimously adopted resolution, on whose ground I stand.”

Since such an important article in the party’s central newspaper couldn’t help but be perceived by readers as the expression of the Politburo’s opinion, Trotsky asked the Politburo “to answer: had it reviewed the question of my article and given corresponding instructions to *Pravda*? ... I can by no means assume that *Pravda*, or individual members of the Politburo, are acting in this extremely important question at their own risk.”⁴

After this, Bukharin sent members of the Politburo and the Presidium of the CCC his own letter, which shows that he had decisively joined the ruling faction in its struggle against Trotsky. “It was I who wrote the front-page article in *Pravda*, and I did so at my own risk,” Bukharin declared. “This lead article was an answer to comrade Trotsky’s letter, and since I didn’t have a shadow of a doubt that it expressed the line of the CC, I didn’t show it to a single member of the CC, and, consequently, not to a single member of the Politburo. Perhaps herein lies my formal error.” Bukharin explained his behavior by saying that Trotsky’s article provoked in him “a feeling of the most profound amazement” and was understood as “a declaration of war”; it was playing an “openly destructive role” and had shaken “the basic foundations of our party.”⁵

On 14 December, eight members and candidate-members of the Politburo sent a letter to members and candidate-members of the CC and CCC, in which they declared Trotsky’s article to be a “break” with the

resolution “On Party-Building.” They accused Trotsky of “juxtaposing the ‘role of the apparatus’ to the ‘independent activity of the party,’ a juxtaposition that was theoretically incorrect, as well as inadmissible and dangerous in practice;” they said he was trying “to arouse hatred toward the party apparatus,” that he was “stirring up the party against its apparatus,” and that he was creating an atmosphere of “complete distrust of the party apparatus.”⁶

All these accusations were immediately put into circulation at public appearances of the Politburo members and their followers. But it was impossible to arouse public opinion in the party against Trotsky on the basis of accusing him of criticizing the party apparatus. Therefore the triumvirs made haste to shift the discussion onto an absolutely new plane — from discussing the ways of changing inner-party relations to accusing Trotsky of “deviations from Bolshevism.” Not wanting to openly name the reasons for their dissatisfaction with Trotsky’s article, they decided to change the topic of discussion, replacing an examination of Trotsky’s arguments with hints at and references to his pre-revolutionary disagreements with Lenin; Trotsky’s position in the current discussion was supposedly a repetition of those disagreements.

Such accusations were first put forward in an article by Stalin, who reproached Trotsky, because he, a former Menshevik, was now “standing in a bloc with Democratic Centralists and a section of ‘Left Communists.’”⁷ It should be noted that the faction of “Democratic Centralists” had been dissolved in 1921, and the former “Left Communists,” who in 1918 had made up approximately half the party, were no more represented among Trotsky’s supporters than among the supporters of the Politburo majority.

Characteristically, in several resolutions supporting the position of the Central Committee majority, for instance in the resolution of the Yekaterinburg provincial committee, the tone of Stalin’s article was condemned. It stressed:

We cannot imagine a single higher party or state body without comrade Trotsky’s most active participation in it, alongside of and with the same rights as comrades Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other members of the Politburo.⁸

The unprecedented character and tone of the attacks on Trotsky upset many members of the party, who sent letters to the Central Committee asking whether these attacks signified the intention of removing Trotsky from the leadership of the party. In response to these letters, the Politburo passed a resolution “Against Exacerbating the Inner-Party Struggle,” in which they said:

While we do not agree with comrade Trotsky on this or that individual point, the Politburo at the same time regards as malicious fabrications any suppositions that in the party’s Central Committee or in its Politburo there is even a single comrade who envisions the work of the Politburo, the Central Committee, or the organs of Soviet power without the most active participation of comrade Trotsky.

The resolution indicated that the Politburo considered it “absolutely necessary to work jointly and harmoniously with comrade Trotsky in all the leading bodies of the party and of state power.” At the same time, the resolution stated that the “New Course” article was being used by the “opposition” to sharpen the inner-party struggle and that, therefore, “it couldn’t help but provoke strong objections both from the central organ of the party, *Pravda*, and from individual members of the Central Committee (comrade Stalin’s article).”⁹

The newspaper simultaneously published the following letter from Trotsky:

Dear Comrades, I am not answering several specific articles which have appeared recently in *Pravda*, because I think that this more fully corresponds to the interests of the party, and in particular, to the discussion which is now being conducted concerning the New Course.

The editors added the following comment to Trotsky’s letter:

The editorial board, as an organ of the Central Committee, was obligated to print articles submitted to *Pravda* in reply to comrade Trotsky’s “New Course” letter and in support of the line of the CC. The editors are naturally prepared to offer the pages of *Pravda* to comrade Trotsky for a reply.¹⁰

1. Троцкий, Л. Д. *К истории русской революции*. М., 1990. С. 199 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The New Course*, London: New Park Publications, 1972, p. 68].

2. Ibid., p. 202 [Ibid., p. 71].

- [3.](#) Ibid., pp. 202–203 [Ibid., p. 71].
- [4.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 12, С. 172 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1990, № 12, “L. D. Trotsky to the Politburo and Presidium of the CCC,” 13 December 1923, p. 172].
- [5.](#) Там же, С. 173–174 [Ibid., “N. I. Bukharin to the Politburo and Presidium of the CCC,” no earlier than 13 December 1923, pp. 173–174].
- [6.](#) Там же, С. 174–175 [Ibid., “Declaration of Eight Members and Candidate-Members of the Politburo,” 14 December 1923, pp. 174–175].
- [7.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].
- [8.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 29 декабря [*Pravda*, 29 December 1923].
- [9.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 18 декабря [*Pravda*, 18 December 1923].
- [10.](#) Там же [Ibid.].

К болезни Л. Д. Троцкого.

Фот. В. П. Микулина.



Л. Д. Троцкий и профессор Гетье.

*"On Trotsky's Illness." L. D. Trotsky and Professor Guétier in the journal **Prozhektor** in 1924.*

19. “My Illness Couldn’t Have Come at a Worse Time”

In Western historiography, the defeat of the Opposition in 1923 sometimes is explained by Trotsky’s illness, which didn’t allow him to speak at a single one of the discussion meetings. Although this explanation, as we will soon see, is not exhaustive, and even exaggerates somewhat the degree to which Trotsky was “cut off” from the discussion, it does have a certain basis. Indeed, during the entire course of the discussion, Trotsky was confined to his bed. “I firmly believed that, if not today, then tomorrow, I would be able to take part in the discussion of the inner-party situation and our new tasks. But my illness couldn’t have come at a worse time, and it proved to be more persistent than the physicians originally thought”¹ — these are the opening words of Trotsky’s “Letter to Party Meetings.” Trotsky also wrote about his illness in reply to one of the workers’ party cells concerning the question it had raised about the reasons for the ferocious criticism of the “New Course” article. He noted:

Anyone who reads the article calmly and in good faith will understand that its actual essence consists in the fact that *bureaucratism* in the party is the greatest danger both for the ruling apparatus and for the rank-and-file party masses. The school of our party is the best in the world — the revolutionary school of Lenin. But it would be fundamentally wrong if we were to rely merely on old capital. Under conditions of a bureaucratic regime in the party, the old capital can be expended almost without being noticed, without any new party capital being accumulated.

Further on, Trotsky wrote that he was getting ready to refute the monstrous distortions and false interpretations of this basic idea in a major article, but his physical state did not allow him to work for more than an hour or two per day.

Nevertheless, I hope to finish an article explaining the basic questions raised by the discussion in the next two to three days, and then I will publish it. I also hope that I will soon be able to get the better of my untimely illness, and then I will be able to speak out in public.²

But Trotsky didn't manage to "get the better of his illness" enough to be able to speak at the discussion meetings. Many think that if he had been able to speak during this discussion, when, for the first and last time after Lenin had left the leadership, the debate between "defenders of the line of the CC" and the "Opposition" was unfolding on even terms, in a free atmosphere, this could have fundamentally influenced the course and outcome of the discussion. For even without Trotsky's immediate support, his defenders in Moscow were able to secure victory in more than one-third of the major party cells. If Trotsky had been healthy, he would have more actively controlled the course of the discussion and been able to resist the Stalinist machinations in falsifying its results.

However, he was forced to limit himself to merely publishing three more articles in *Pravda*, in which he explained and developed his position on questions concerning groupings, the relationship between older and younger party generations, and so forth. The articles published in *Pravda* were included by him in the pamphlet *The New Course*, along with several other articles: "Bureaucratism and Revolution," "Tradition and Revolutionary Policy," and "Underestimating the Peasantry." In the foreword to the pamphlet, Trotsky wrote that he had not changed a single word in the articles which had been published earlier: "This will allow the reader to more easily judge how monstrously the meaning of these articles has been distorted and continues to be distorted at times during the discussion."³

In articles added as an appendix to the collection, Trotsky replied to personal attacks which had been made both in public speeches and in the last secret declaration of the majority of the Politburo to members and

candidate-members of the CC and CCC.⁴ In the article, “Tradition and Revolutionary Policy,” he wrote:

It is ridiculous and pathetic to try to hypnotize a great revolutionary party by repeating the same incantations, according to which the correct line must be sought not in the essence of each question, not in the methods of discussing and resolving it, but in information ... of a biographical character.

Compelled to give answers to “information” of this type, which was fervently being dragged into the discussion by his opponents, Trotsky wrote:

I by no means consider the path by which I came to Leninism to be less safe or reliable than other paths. I came to Lenin fighting, but I came to him fully and completely. Besides my actions in the service of the party, I can give no further guarantees to anyone. And if the question is to be posed on the plane of biographical investigations, then it must be done properly. In that case the answer would have to be given to pointed questions: did everyone who was faithful to the master in small matters prove to be faithful to him in major ones as well? Is Leninism exhausted by obedience? I have no intention of looking into these questions, using as examples individual comrades with whom on my part I intend to work in the future hand in hand.⁵

Nevertheless, Trotsky touched in passing on several of these “pointed questions” while analyzing the history of the inner-party disagreements. He wrote:

We saw not long ago, how the most official interpreters of party traditions concerning the national question came into open contradiction both with the needs of party policy on the national question, and with comrade Lenin’s position.⁶

Characteristically, neither Stalin nor his allies at that time responded with a single word to this comment by Trotsky. But then they had no need to, for the booklet *The New Course* was published on 16 January 1924, the day the Thirteenth Party Conference opened, when the fate of the Opposition had already been decided.

In my opinion, the main reason for the defeat of the Opposition in the first inner-party discussion, which took place without Lenin’s participation, was the fact that Trotsky and his co-thinkers decided to juxtapose themselves openly to the triumvirate and the party

bureaucracy which supported it only at the end of 1923, when the process of selecting the apparatus and placing the leading cadres was proceeding at a very advanced tempo. This had led to a situation where “three-quarters of the apparatus had already been selected for taking the struggle into the masses.”⁷

However, at the end of 1923, the degree to which the outcome of the discussion was predetermined, due to the pressure of the apparatus and the factional machinations of the Politburo majority, was still not clear to either of the contending sides. After the appearance of the “Letter to Party Meetings,” the Opposition went on the offensive, openly speaking at party meetings and in the party press about the abnormal inner-party regime which had developed and about the need to replace it with inner-party democracy.

1. Троцкий, Л. Д., *К истории русской революции*, С. 198 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, “The New Course (A Letter to Party Meetings)” in *The New Course*, New Park Publications, 1972, p. 68].

2. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 3, С. 204, 206 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 3, “Trotsky’s Letter to the Party Cell of the Railroad-Yard of the Moscow Section of the October Railway,” 22 December 1923, pp. 204, 206].

3. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Новый курс*, М., 1924, С. 6 [Cf. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p. 3].

4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 12, С. 174–179 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1990, № 12, “Declaration of Eight Members and Candidate-Members of the Politburo of the CC RKP(b),” 14 December 1923, pp. 174–179].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *К истории русской революции*, С. 192 [Cf. Trotsky, “Tradition and Revolutionary Policy,” in *The New Course*, p. 43].

6. Там же, С. 190 [Ibid., p. 40].

7. Троцкий, Л. Д., «Что и как произошло?», С. 33 [Leon Trotsky, “Stalin’s Victory,” in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975, p. 42].

20. What Should the Party Regime Be Like?

During the course of the inner-party discussion, members of the Opposition frequently attempted to determine why the issue of inner-party democracy became so sharp at the end of 1923. They stressed in this regard that the ban on factions and groupings passed by the Tenth Party Congress contradicted the democratic development of inner-party life. In explaining the reasons for adopting this resolution, Saprnov recalled a speech made by Lenin during the work of the Tenth Congress. Before a gathering of old party workers, Lenin had justified his proposal to ban factions by referring to the critical situation in the country that had arisen at the beginning of 1921. Saprnov noted:

I can guarantee that you will not now find a single pessimist in the party who would assess today's situation in the same way that comrade Lenin assessed the situation at that time. Soviet power is much stronger now than ever before, and if it is threatened by danger, then that danger issues not from the possibility that Soviet power will be overthrown, but that Soviet power might degenerate if the party is not able to revive itself and strengthen its ties to the working class.¹

Members of the Opposition stressed that, along with the decision to ban factions, which was dictated by extreme circumstances, the Tenth Congress had passed a strategic resolution intended to broaden inner-party democracy. This resolution, however, had not been carried out. Karl Radek noted that in recent years, "despite the absence of civil war,

we have not had the type of workers' democracy which is now being discussed by all comrades." Radek felt that the reasons for such a situation were the following:

Extreme need in the period of transition to the NEP did not allow the "luxury of discussions." ... Then came the famine and Lenin's illness; they in turn did not allow us to conduct these discussions. We decided to set all these problems aside in order to solve them later on under his leadership. These circumstances, objectively determined, ... did not allow for democratization and were the objective reason for the appearance of dangerous habits.²

In an article published in *Pravda* at the beginning of the discussion, Rafail described in detail the reasons why the resolution of the Tenth Congress concerning workers' democracy remained on paper and was not implemented. He recalled:

When the New Economic Policy was being introduced, comrade Lenin said, with all his familiar resolve, that the earlier period had been a mistake; he then added that he had used the word "mistake" in order to adopt the new economic course as resolutely as possible. ... Unfortunately, such words were not spoken as resolutely with regard to the new course in inner-party policy. The apparatus, which had directed the party during the period of war communism, continued through inertia to direct it according to the same system and was not in agreement with the changed situation.

The use of command methods, which could have been justified under conditions of the civil war, but which had lost all justification after its conclusion, engendered an authoritarian psychology in the apparatus, which "in its present form cannot change its ways swiftly and resolutely ... It is not enough that the apparatus has been badly shaken (as it has been now); it must be re-educated, its psychology must be changed." This was all the more necessary, because after the Tenth Congress, and especially during Lenin's illness, the regime in the party had taken a turn for the worse: the free exchange of opinions, the freedom to criticize, and the freedom to engage in ideological struggle all came under attack. Certain tendencies began to find expression in the behavior of the apparatus; the apparatus neglected the growth of certain moods in the party and among the masses of workers; it desired to do the thinking and make decisions for the party; it directed all its attention to

administrative questions, and it attempted to brand all criticism of its administrative methods as factionalism. Leadership on the basis of “giving orders,” which had become a typical phenomenon, found expression above all in the activity of the *Uchraspred* [Registration and Distribution Department] of the Central Committee. This body began to widely employ “disgraceful methods of the apparatus,” namely, “examination boards,” “confidential personal files,” secret profiles of party members, etc.³

Members of the Opposition predicted, therefore, that the bureaucrats, or “apparatchiki” (a concept first used by Sapronov), would offer resistance to implementing the resolution of 5 December 1923; they would utilize the ban on factions passed at the Tenth Congress in order to render meaningless the resolution of the same congress on workers’ democracy; and they would supplant criticism of the leadership’s command methods with rhetoric about the danger of factional groupings and the destruction of party unity. Sapronov stated directly that the real opposition to the CC resolution of 5 December issued from

that part of the party apparatus which is frightened to death by the new course; which interprets the silence of the party as unity; which considers itself insufficiently strong to employ the means of persuasion; which in recent years, utilizing the resolution of the Tenth Congress, has branded as a faction any group or individual with their own opinion and thereby managed to achieve a “conspiracy of silence” within the party; and which somehow detects in the new course — which in fact is the party’s pledge to renew itself — the specter of its collapse. This explains the campaign against factions which is now being undertaken by comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev with the support of *Pravda*’s editors.⁴

Rafail formulated a similar analysis in even sharper terms. He emphasized that the CC majority was accusing the Opposition of defending factionalism in order to conceal the formation “of the real faction which is led by Kamenev, Zinoviev, and other comrades. This faction exists for the sole purpose of restoring the old course ... The majority in the party, which has only recently received the possibility of expressing itself as the question is being raised, may be driven into silence at any time. The possibility of criticizing is being eliminated, and

all this creates conditions in which we remain at our old position.” In replying to Zinoviev, who asserted that during the discussion the majority had voted for the CC, and that the majority of the party cannot be a faction, Rafail said:

The entire line of today’s majority ... leads to forcing the party to remain silent no matter what. In fact it is you, supporters of the majority, you, the factionalists, who will even criticize those measures with which you do not agree, while at the same time you will denounce anyone who voices such criticism as oppositionists, splitters, and so forth.⁵

In raising the question why both sides in the discussion expressed agreement with the recent resolution and at the same time were waging such a ferocious struggle over its interpretation, N. Osinsky pointed out that a similar struggle had already begun during the drafting of the resolution.

If they were to publish the CC’s initial draft of the 5 December resolution, alongside all of Trotsky’s corrections, then it would become clear that Trotsky’s corrections constitute the real spirit of the resolution, without which it would provide no democracy at all. Thanks to certain pressure, these corrections were included. We took into account that the resolution was the resultant of two forces, and therefore as soon as it was passed we began to safeguard it, and now we stand guard in order to ensure that this resultant is preserved and that the matter proceeds along this line in the future.⁶



Ivan Nikitich Smirnov (1881–1936)

As I. N. Smirnov emphasized, the true realization of this resolution could only be achieved if “we involve the entire party in resolving fundamental problems of economic and political life; and through the party, if we involve the entire working class in their resolution, without attempting to solve these questions by the participation of only 20,000 people working in the party apparatus. If we entrust this task only to the party apparatus, we will be introducing no democracy. We must awaken the thinking

of every individual party member and resolve the issues that confront us in a collective manner.”⁷

Such a turn in the discussion suited neither the CC majority, nor the party apparatus standing behind it, which sensed in the declaration of the new course on inner-party policy a threat to its uncontrolled power. “For the first time, after a three-year hibernation,” Sapronov stated, the party “intends to begin using its head, and now the party apparatchiki, who created, or at least protected, the party’s lengthy hibernation, is horrified at the mere idea of using its head, and now has begun to envision all kinds of revolutions. In the speeches against the apparatus they perceive speeches against the party.” Sapronov emphasized that “the party is strong enough to re-build its apparatus in time, to correct it in time, which it must do. The party does not exist for the sake of the apparatus, but the apparatus for the sake of the party.”⁸



Aleksandr Shlyapnikov (1885–1937)

Of course, at this point, the entire mass of apparatchiki had not degenerated to the same extent as the triumvirate, which, long before the discussion, had turned to political falsification and provocations. The majority of apparatchiki during this period were honest people, sincerely devoted to the cause of the party and the revolution; however, they had already lost the ability to perceive critical signals from below and, simultaneously, to examine critically the decisions that issued from

above.

In characterizing this stage of degeneration, which affected a significant part of the party’s ranks, Preobrazhensky stated that “the policy of official bureaucratic prosperity” promoted by the CC majority had generated a particular type of apparatchik, who “was capable of dying for the party ... yet did not possess the courage, and never would possess it, to tell the CC that it was mistaken when the CC truly was mistaken. They do not carry out their main function, which is to issue

warning signals if the CC is making mistakes; and it is this flaw in the old course of our party policy which we should not repeat in the new course.”⁹

The opposition also pointed out that the conservative resistance of the party apparatus to the new course toward inner-party democracy reflected the party’s division into governing and governed, which, in turn, expressed itself in the significant material inequality between communists. In summarizing his impressions from discussion in workers’ cells, Iosif Khodorovsky noted that the protest of rank-and-file Communists was “directed against the material inequality in the ranks of our party. Our urgent task, which we must tackle immediately, is to place on the agenda a genuine struggle against excesses and against striking inequality.”¹⁰

At discussion meetings, especially in workers’ cells, participants advanced demands for the leveling of the material status of all party members, the lowering of the salaries of party officials to nearly that of skilled workers, etc. Describing these moods, Aleksandr Shlyapnikov wrote:

The issue of an inner-party workers’ democracy is inseparable from the issue of material inequality between party members. Under conditions of the New Economic Policy, it is utopian to dream of all-embracing equality; however, we do have the means to eliminate those glaring excesses which have a deleterious effect not only upon those who perpetrate them, but on the surrounding elements, as well. When considering this issue, it would not be superfluous for us to recall that, at one time, we attempted to resolve this problem and resolved it correctly. After the October days, we passed a decree stating that the salaries of party officials should correspond to the wages of highly-skilled workers. Why should we not undertake this step now? Why should we not simply prohibit the supplementary earnings received by party officials? Such a measure would bring satisfaction not only to the party ranks, but also far beyond them. We should recall that this very step was taken by the Paris Commune.¹¹

In their speeches, the Opposition pointed out that existing party morals and attitudes were alienating from the party the best non-party workers, who did not at all wish to view entry into the party as a

springboard to a political career or as a bridge leading to the ranks of professional bureaucrats. “It is worth considering what is being said in the party cells,” Sapronov noted.

All the speeches acknowledge, first and foremost, that, given the contemporary state of the party, the non-party worker who is fully class-conscious and unconditionally sympathizes with us, and who could raise significantly the number of workers from the bench within the party, does not wish to join the party for fear of becoming a party bureaucrat. The party mass correctly perceives here a real danger; moreover, it correctly perceives that workers’ democracy is a radical means of resisting the unnatural gulf that is beginning to appear between the party and the proletariat.¹²

Representatives of the Opposition emphasized that party democracy was meaningless without the legalization of ideological groupings that inevitably arose during the process of democratic discussion. With the aim of rendering more precise, and changing the Tenth Congress resolution on party unity in accordance with the new conditions, Preobrazhensky said:

If ideological groupings form within the party who wish to convince the party that their proposed policies on the economy, finances, inner-party structure, etc. are more correct and more acceptable than those proposed by the official majority ... then who can say that such groupings are inadmissible? Why should we not permit groupings that prepare themselves for the congress, who wish to persuade the majority of the party with regard to this or that issue, which is fully in conformity with our party statutes?

After all, there are a number of groups of Communists who, thanks to their unusual foresight, acute perception, and links to the masses are able to formulate necessary changes in the policy of the party before the party majority will do so. Under conditions of normal party life, such groupings will break up quickly and then re-group along different lines in response to new issues that arise. When, however, “the members of certain ideological groupings, such as those that formed in the past, are removed from their party positions ... that compels them to form an independent group.” This was precisely the policy pursued in recent years by the CC majority, which rejected “even a minimal degree of democratic-centralism” and displayed a tendency to form a distinct

grouping. The leaders of this particular grouping appropriated for themselves “a monopoly on the defense of Bolshevism” and created an unauthorized factional association. In support of this view, Preobrazhensky added:

At the party congress, comrade Stalin declared that, in his opinion, the congress had expressed the approval of the ruling troika in the Politburo. What troika? The party knows only the CC and the Politburo, but knows nothing about any troikas.¹³

The resolutions proposed by the Opposition at party meetings stated directly that the party apparatus, which had been formed “in the period of the military-command system ... in the majority of cases consisted of appointed comrades; it developed servility to rank in the party masses, toadyism, fear of one’s own thoughts, and the desire to please and receive promotion.”¹⁴ In order to liquidate “the policy of bureaucratic well-being,” the Opposition proposed to abolish the system of appointments and introduce a system of electing all party organs and senior officials of the apparatus. A resolution by the united meeting of VTsIK cells called for the party to wage a fight “against the one-sided selection of party centers according to personal, circle, and group interests, the desire for promotions, toadyism, and so forth.”¹⁵

During the discussion of 1923, differences on issues pertaining to the party regime somewhat overshadowed the differences on problems of the party’s socioeconomic policy. Nevertheless, the polemic over these issues, too, became particularly sharp. At the end of December 1923, four of the leading economists in the Opposition (Piatakov, Osinsky, Preobrazhensky, and V. M. Smirnov) sent a note to the Politburo in which they claimed that the Central Committee was not implementing the decisions of the Twelfth Congress on the strengthening of planning elements in the management of the economy. As a result, the work of the supreme economic organs was proceeding unsystematically; the unsystematic nature of this work, in turn, was allowing trade and industry in the private sector to develop more quickly than in the

government sector, thus facilitating the uncontrolled accumulation of capital by Nepmen. Preobrazhensky explained:

The following process is taking place in the area of economic and social relations: our state economy is developing, but capitalist relations are developing along with it. Social accumulation in our state economy is proceeding much more slowly than the accumulation of capital under the NEP, which is developing at a colossal speed; therefore, these forces now oppose one another, and a serious struggle between these two sectors of our economy is underway.¹⁶

The Opposition proposed to intensify the struggle against private capital in the trade sector, which at the time occupied dominant positions, as well as against the accumulation of nonproductive NEP capital and wealth. The Opposition proposed to wage this war not by eliminating market relations, however, but through a tax increase against the capitalist elements of the city, a means which was intended to serve as one of the sources for the development of state industry. The Opposition also proposed to levy a luxury tax, as well as to close down gambling houses, casinos, and other centers of bourgeois corruption.

By increasing control over them, both from above and below, the Opposition also proposed to reorganize the system of trade cooperatives and to exercise a form of “trade intervention”; that is, it proposed to increase imports of foreign consumer goods in order to reduce the commodity shortage that was benefiting speculators while harming the state.

1. *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].

2. *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].

3. *Правда*, 1923, 22 декабря [*Pravda*, 22 December 1923].

4. *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].

5. *Правда*, 1924, 15 января [*Pravda*, 15 January 1924].

6. *Правда*, 1924, 13 января [*Pravda*, 13 January 1924].

7. *Правда*, 1923, 18 декабря [*Pravda*, 18 December 1923].

8. *Правда*, 1923, 19 декабря [*Pravda*, 19 December 1923].

9. *Правда*, 1924, 15 января [*Pravda*, 15 January 1924].

- [10.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 18 декабря [*Pravda*, 18 December 1923].
- [11.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 18 января [*Pravda*, 18 January 1924].
- [12.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].
- [13.](#) Там же [*Ibid*].
- [14.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 11 декабря [*Pravda*, 11 December 1923].
- [15.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].
- [16.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 13 января [*Pravda*, 13 January 1924].

Враги! Давно ли друг от друга
Их жажда крови отняла?
Давно ль они часы досуга,
Трапезу, шутки и дела
Делили дружески? Или злобно
Врагам изолדותский поздравил...
А. Пушкин.

Рис. 50. Египет



„Дискуссионная“ переработка известной дуэли...

Н. Бухарин.

Г. Зиновьев.

Г. Пятаков.

Е. Преображенский.

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21. How Did the “Majority” Respond to the Opposition?

Today, in light of all subsequent historical experience, the ideas advanced by the Opposition — at least the idea of struggling for the democratization of party life — must seem indisputable to any unbiased observer. At the time they were first advanced, they also found an active response among communists raised on the Leninist traditions of the party, as well as among the party youth. In the face of such support for the Opposition, the triumvirate found it necessary to regroup quickly and introduce new demagogic methods in the inner-party struggle.

The triumvirate found it necessary to defend the many formulas that they had begun to circulate widely, such as the call for “undivided support” and “absolute,” “unconditional trust” of the Central Committee; the declaration forbidding “harassment of the apparatus”; and the formula describing the Opposition as “anti-party.” For this purpose they utilized the Petrograd city organization, which was under the strict control of Zinoviev’s group. On 18 December, *Pravda* published a “Letter from the Petrograd Organization to Members of Our Party,” which had been endorsed at an all-city meeting of the bureaus of party cells and active officials by a vote of nearly three thousand to five, with seven abstentions. The letter insisted that bureaucratism predominated only in the state apparatus, but not in the party apparatus; that factions indicated “a split in the party and, therefore, a split in the government”; and that “the party should consist of one monolithic whole.”¹

It was precisely the leading members of the Leningrad organization who most shamelessly distorted Bolshevik tradition regarding freedom of opinion in the party. An article by Ilya Vardin provided an especially demagogic example: “All that we hear from the Opposition,” he wrote, “on the apparatus, on democracy, on ‘self-initiative,’ on the ‘self-administered party,’ on ‘bureaucratic centralism’ — all this is merely the same old refrain of social democratism and even anarchism.” Vardin viewed the Opposition’s struggle for “freedom of opinion” and “freedom of criticism” in the party merely as “an attempt by a number of comrades to lead the party into the swamp of intellectual philistinism.” Interpreting the program and tactics of the Bolsheviks as a dogmatic canon, not subject to any kind of change under any kind of conditions, Vardin declared — in blatant contradiction to Lenin’s views:

Freedom of criticism was never a Bolshevik slogan. The Bolsheviks always understood that in a unified militant party criticism inevitably should be of a limited and practical nature, but never of a principled nature ... Freedom of opinions is placed within a specific framework; but any “opinion” expressed outside of this framework cannot be tolerated.²

Zinoviev’s declaration was even more specific. At the very beginning of the discussion, he declared to the Opposition:

If you think that the time has come to legalize factions and groupings, then say so directly. We believe that such a time has not yet arrived and will never arrive during the dictatorship of the proletariat.³

The position expressed by Zinoviev found support in the party bureaucracy. Having already enjoyed a taste of uncontrolled power and command-administrative methods of leadership, the bureaucracy saw in the ideas of the Opposition, as well as in the practical implications that flowed from those ideas, a threat to its own monopoly position in the party. In their conservative opposition to the new course, the triumvirate and its supporters in the apparatus resorted from the very beginning of the discussion to a hitherto untried method of inner-party struggle: the interpretation of disagreements within the party as a struggle between Bolsheviks and elements hostile to Bolshevism, to Leninism.

In the discussion of 1923, other methods of struggle were tried for the first time that Stalin and his supporters would successfully use in all subsequent discussions: declaring any ideological grouping arising in the party to be factional and divisive, and any criticism of the CC majority or Politburo to be an attack on the unity of the party ranks. They described the internal party discussions themselves as “foisted upon the party” by oppositionists and as obstacles to socialist construction that were distracting Communists from their practical work; they reminded their opponents of participation in previous oppositions and factions, and attempted to link the former differences with present ones.

Such methods were used first and foremost with regard to Trotsky, whom the Politburo majority accused of “fighting hand-in-hand with opportunists over the course of many years against Bolshevism.”⁴

In touching upon similar charges, Preobrazhensky said:

When we also raise here the polemic with comrade Trotsky, based on recollections and the like, then I ask you: if sitting among us here were Rosa Luxemburg, who often disagreed with Lenin, and who ... wrote a lamentable pamphlet about our October Revolution; if she were alive today and participating in this dispute on the side of the Opposition, then I ask you: would you raise these recollections from the past, and would you begin to treat her name as you are now doing with the distant past of comrade Trotsky? This policy is inadmissible and stupid — one can't describe it otherwise — because, if you want to work together tomorrow, you cannot conduct such a policy today. Otherwise, what will you tell your comrades tomorrow?⁵

Preobrazhensky protested against shifting discussion to the level of importunate references to twenty-year-old differences. In revealing the true meaning behind mixing up these long outlived differences with present ones, Preobrazhensky said:

When comrades read us lectures on the history of our party since 1903, which all the old Bolsheviks know well, they are doing so in order to justify the bureaucratism of the apparatus in 1923. Then we must say: objectively you are working in favor of the old course, in favor of bureaucratic well-being and of that very policy which has been tearing us away from the broad working masses.⁶

In its struggle against Trotsky, the triumvirate utilized still another device, which consisted in hinting at the inadmissibility of a “cult of leaders” that his supporters were allegedly inflating in relation to Trotsky. In debunking this legend, which had just begun to find its way into the party press, Preobrazhensky revealed its actual meaning and purpose:

We oppose this cult of leaders, but we are also opposed to the practice whereby, in place of the cult of a single leader, we find substituted a cult of other leaders, only upon a smaller scale ... Leaders may quarrel, they may die, and they may be put to rest on Red Square, but the party must and will continue to live.

Directly accusing the triumvirate of portraying themselves as the only “legitimate” successors to Lenin, in order to carry out the policy of their group and preserve their own power over the party, Preobrazhensky declared: “You cannot replace comrade Lenin completely, for you have less talent, but considerably more conceit.”⁷

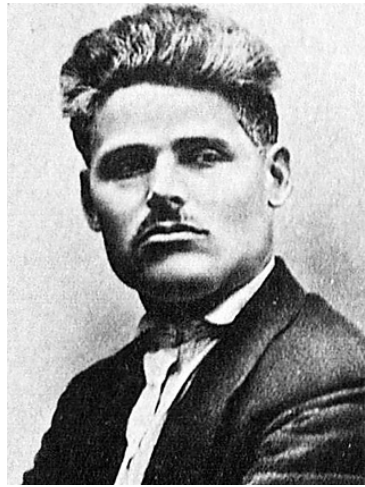
When Trotsky was reproached for his warning about the possible degeneration of the old party “leaders,” N. Osinsky explained the meaning of Trotsky’s words in the following way:

There is an entire group of comrades who have a monopoly on Leninism, and should you attempt to utter a word against them, then you will always be branded an anti-Leninist, anti-Marxist, etc. Comrade Trotsky was completely correct in saying to these sinless apostles of Leninism, when they declared themselves as such and transformed Lenin’s words into holy scripture: “no kind of apostleship will guarantee a correct policy.”⁸

Members of the Opposition often directed attention to the demagogic character of the triumvirate’s declarations that its position would have received Lenin’s full support, had he been able to participate in the discussion. “Kamenev refers to comrade Lenin,” Osinsky said, “but Lenin is one thing, while you three and the others standing by you are something else.”⁹ “Now we encounter — here, there and everywhere — evocations of comrade Lenin’s name by comrade Kamenev, some of which are appropriate while others are not ... If he were with us, he most certainly would say such-and-such,” Sapronov explained sarcastically and added:



N. Osinsky (Obolensky)
(1887–1938)



Timofei Sapronov
(1887–1937)

To say that we were friends of Lenin and therefore we will remain Leninists for our entire life, and constantly hide behind Lenin's back — that is undisguised demagoguery ... Let's not hide behind his back, but express our own opinions instead.^{[10](#)}

The Opposition recalled that Lenin always took in a variety of opinions and moods that existed in the party, and the party line always grew out of a comparison of these various opinions. In contrast to this, the present discussion was being reduced by the majority to frightening the party with the bogeyman of factionalism, which was, in fact, the way the majority understood the very right to discuss and criticize the activity of the Central Committee.

Even more demagogic were the triumvirate's accusations that the Opposition was "revising historical Bolshevism." On this point Radek reminded the CC and its supporters that "we were all flabbergasted" by Lenin's warnings of a split expressed in his article on Rabkrin.

Vladimir Ilyich obviously knows both the party's past and the tendencies within it better than we ... Neither side is considering a split; yet many in this

struggle are taking steps that exacerbate the situation and may lead to very serious consequences ... You will be deciding, according to your conscience, growing economic problems; decide every one of these questions, but do not permit yourselves to claim that this is a struggle between Leninism and Trotskyism, between Bolsheviks and elements in our party that are hostile to Bolshevism. There are no such elements in our party. (Applause) Different parts of our party arrived at Leninism by different roads; individual members of the party arrived along different paths. We have absorbed elements from dozens of parties and combined them all into a single party. Whoever comes to us and digs up fragments of ideas from the history of the party and tries to create the impression that what we have here is a struggle between Leninism and anti-Leninism — is a splitter, no matter how much he swears by party unity (Applause).

Radek then protested against the canonization of any utterance by Lenin in the name of “Leninism,” recalling that Lenin himself was the first to speak out against such canonization: “Comrades, Leninism was not born in a single day. When I was looking through the writings of Vladimir Ilyich in 1910, and underlining several things, he said to me: ‘You’re underlining nonsense.’” Stating that Leninism had “undergone an enormous evolution,” Radek recalled that when concrete questions were being decided, “there were many days in which Vladimir Ilyich arrived at one decision in the morning, then shifted his position in the evening. On the issue pertaining to Urquhart’s concession, Vladimir Ilyich changed his mind three times. The question of introducing a tax in kind arose before it was resolved, even before it had fully matured.” Radek added that Lenin “knew that many comrades were breaking lances with him; nonetheless, he warned us not against replacing Leninism by some other ‘ism,’ but warned instead of a split in the party.”¹¹

During the discussion, however, the supporters of the majority interpreted Lenin’s warning about a split in such a way that the real danger of a split was prompted by the Opposition’s “deviation” toward opportunism, Menshevism, etc. With this in mind, members of the Opposition noted that the discussion from the very beginning had not resembled an “inner-party” discussion. Never before in party discussions had an opposition been addressed in such a malicious tone. Preobrazhensky recalled that when Lenin in 1920 turned out to be in the

minority at a meeting of Moscow party officials, he did not panic and begin to accuse his opponents of “deviating” in one direction or another.

He knew well that the party would debate the issue at hand and, in the end, would arrive at the correct decision. That’s the attitude of a party leader toward disagreements, which should be submitted to the party for discussion, so that the party may think everything over calmly.

Preobrazhensky further noted that, even during the trade union discussion, the opposing sides did not resort to the labels that the CC majority was now using against the Opposition.

Although the situation at that time was a thousand times more difficult — for we were making the transition from military work to peacetime civilian work, with significant vacillation among the peasantry — the majority did not permit itself to behave as the majority is now behaving. Now the CC has begun to panic and is opening the type of artillery fire on us that would make sense if it were necessary to remove us, with comrade Trotsky at our head, from the party altogether. But if this is not the case, then all this is a product of panic, the product of the fact that the CC has become extremely frightened, in particular, of losing its authority in Moscow, as a result of which it has committed most serious errors.¹²

Thus, although it had not yet occurred to anyone to remove dissenting elements from the party, the CC majority had already begun to employ those “ideological” methods of struggle with dissenting thought that in subsequent years would lead at first to party, and then to outright police, forms of repression.

Preobrazhensky reproached the CC majority for adopting a tone in Pravda from the very beginning that “horrified the provinces and delighted the White Guards — doesn’t this reek of a split?” He then said:

You have not shown the composure which Comrade Lenin always exhibited whenever the party was verifying one issue or another. Comrade Lenin never permitted himself to attack those comrades who submitted resolutions, some of which you had already discussed and passed; he never adopted such a divisive tone toward the opposition ... You cannot treat a most serious tendency in the party in such a manner. You are not allowing a calm consideration of the issues that have matured ... This discussion has significantly frightened the party, which now thinks that if the issues are

discussed further, then the unity of the party may suffer, and thus it is more concerned about the unity of the party than anything else.¹³

In its effort to frighten the party with the danger of a split, the CC majority placed the party's need for democracy at odds with its need for unity, rather than combining these two equally essential requirements for a healthy party life.

While attempting to prove the correctness of the CC's main thesis — on the impermissibility of ideological groupings and factional formations in the party — Bukharin made an unexpected confession in the heat of the discussion, which would later cost him dearly. At a meeting of the party activists of the Krasnopresnensky district, Bukharin decided to share his own “factional” experience. He announced that during the most intense period of the struggle over the Brest peace, the leaders of the SR party approached him, as leader of the “left communist” faction, and proposed to arrest the Soviet of People's Commissars, with Lenin at its head, and to form a new government headed by Piatakov. The proposal, moreover, had even been discussed in “left communist” circles.

Zinoviev and Stalin immediately took advantage of Bukharin's oral statement by reporting it in *Pravda*. Moreover, Zinoviev characterized the given information as “an excellent historical illustration” of how “two factions inside of a party which directs the government represent none other than the embryo of two governments.”¹⁴ Stalin went still further in his categorical assertion:

As we know (! – V. R.), the left communists, who at that time comprised a separate faction, became so embittered that they were seriously discussing the replacement of the existing Sovnarkom with a new Sovnarkom of new people, who were members of the faction of left communists. A number of the present oppositionists, comrades Preobrazhensky, Piatakov, Stukov, and others, belonged to the faction of left communists.¹⁵

In response to these insinuations, a group of former left communists (Radek, Piatakov, Preobrazhensky, Yakovleva, and others) declared that in 1918 they knew nothing of Bukharin's “negotiations” with the Left SRs. Then Bukharin was compelled to explain publicly that he merely had in

mind his “passing conversation” with the Left SR Kamkov, which he did not report to his comrades in the faction.¹⁶

Subsequently, this episode was forgotten until 1929, when in the heat of his struggle with the “right deviation,” Stalin raised it again, suggesting that Bukharin had not told the entire story behind his negotiations with the Left SRs. This “gap” was filled in at the trial of the “anti-Soviet right-Trotskyist bloc,” when former leaders of the “left communists” and Left SRs, speaking as witnesses, were forced to declare that Bukharin, with the knowledge of the other “left communist” leaders, conspired with the Left SRs not only to arrest, but also to murder, Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov.

By consistently destroying, in the course of the discussion, the Leninist conception of party unity, which presupposed the freedom to express diverse opinions within the party, the triumvirs and their supporters replaced it with a conception of a “monolithic party.” According to this conception, the expression by party members of any views differing with a position of the CC majority and the Politburo was seen to be an expression of factionalism and intentions hostile to the party. The definition of the party as “a monolithic organization, hewed from a single block,” appeared in Stalin’s report at the Thirteenth Party Conference;¹⁷ after this speech, the formula of “the Bolshevik view of the party as a monolithic whole” was included in a resolution passed by the conference.¹⁸

1. *Правда*, 1923, 18 декабря [*Pravda*, 18 December 1923].

2. *Правда*, 1923, 23 декабря [*Pravda*, 23 December 1923].

3. *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].

4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 12, С. 178 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1990, № 12, “Declaration of Eight Members and Candidate-Members of the Politburo of the CC RKP(b),” 9 December 1923, p. 178].

5. *Правда*, 1924, 15 января [*Pravda*, 15 January 1924].

6. Там же [*Ibid.*].

7. Там же [*Ibid.*].

8. *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].

9. *Правда*, 1924, 13 января [*Pravda*, 13 January 1924].

- [10.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 14 декабря [*Pravda*, 14 December 1923].
- [11.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].
- [12.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 13 января [*Pravda*, 13 January 1924].
- [13.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [14.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].
- [15.](#) *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].
- [16.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 3 января [*Pravda*, 3 January 1924].
- [17.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 23 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 6, p. 23].
- [18.](#) *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях*, Т. 3, 1984, С. 155. [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, 1984, p. 155].

22. A Stalinist Forgery

The results of the voting on the outcome of the 1923 discussion were never reported officially. Contemporary historians believe that 40,000 to 50,000 people (more than 10 percent of the party membership) voted for the platform of the Opposition,¹ i.e., far more than in any of the subsequent discussions.

Yet there are grounds to believe that the number of those who voted for the Opposition was far greater, since the official figures were the result of falsified calculations which were the product of a crude provocation and forgery by Stalin. Although Stalin had already hastened to declare in one of his first discussion articles that the Opposition “had been crushed,”² the CC was receiving reports suggesting that the majority of party organizations, especially in Moscow, were voting for the Opposition. As Bazhanov recalled:

At a meeting of the “troika” where these reports were discussed, Zinoviev and Kamenev turned to Stalin and asked him what he thought of the matter. “I believe,” Stalin replied, “that it is completely irrelevant, who in the party votes, and how; what is extraordinarily important, however, is who will count the votes, and how.” Even Kamenev, who should have known Stalin by now, demonstrably cleared his throat.³

The following day, Stalin approved a resolution of the Orgburo appointing Nazaretian, the head of his personal secretariat, to administer the party department at *Pravda*. Subsequent events, according to Bazhanov, unfolded in the following manner. Results of the votes at party meetings were being received by *Pravda*.



Amayak Nazaretian
(1889–1937)



Boris Bazhanov
(1900–1982)

The work of Nazaretian is very simple; at a meeting of some party cell, let us say, 300 people voted for the CC, 600 against; Nazaretian reverses the figures, 600 for the CC, and 300 against. That is what is printed in *Pravda*. And the same is done to the results for all the organizations. Of course, once a party cell has read in *Pravda* a false report on the results of its vote, it protests, calls *Pravda* and eventually reaches the department of party life. Nazaretian responds with a polite promise to verify the results immediately. Upon verification it turns out that “you were completely correct; a regrettable mistake has been made at the typesetters: you know, they have more than enough work to do there; *Pravda* will send its apologies to you; a correction will be printed.” Each party cell assumes that this is an exceptional mistake which has happened only to itself, and has no idea that the same thing is happening to the majority of cells. Meanwhile, a general picture is gradually being created that the CC is beginning to win all down the line. The provinces become more cautious and begin to fall in behind Moscow, that is, behind the CC.

This forgery, however, unexpectedly misfired. In order to inform Stalin of the real situation, Nazaretian sent him a summary of both the actual results of the vote as well as how *Pravda* corrected the results. One

of the staff members in Stalin's secretariat discovered these reports and, disturbed by the falsifications, forwarded them to Trotsky. Trotsky raised the issue of the forgery at a meeting of the Politburo. Stalin promised immediately to conduct an investigation and, a week later, reported to the Politburo that the investigation revealed the personal guilt of Nazaretian, who was immediately recalled from the party department at *Pravda* and sent to work in the provinces.

By the end of the investigation, however, it turned out that "everything was already finished; the necessary result had been achieved and the machine set off in the opposite direction; the majority was going over to the CC; the Opposition had suffered a defeat."⁴

The testimony given by Bazhanov is supported by other sources, including a number of items published during the course of the discussion. For example, on 16 December, Sapronov accused *Pravda* of printing those draft resolutions of the Opposition that had been rejected at several party meetings, but not the resolutions of major party organizations that had supported the Opposition."⁵

In the draft resolution he proposed at the Moscow provincial conference, where it received sixty-one votes, Preobrazhensky condemned the "impermissibly partial and distorted information in the central party organ, *Pravda*, about the course of the discussion; the refusal to allow the publication of a series of articles by comrades who criticized the majority; and elections to the conference that unfairly reject the candidacy of comrades from the Opposition."⁶ Preobrazhensky emphasized in his speech at the conference that 90 percent of the articles submitted to *Pravda* during the course of the discussion were directed against the old course; however, the Politburo banned the publication in *Pravda* of the articles written by even such prominent members of the Opposition as Piatakov and Smirnov.⁷

On 23 December, a comment "From the CCC of the RCP(B)" appeared in *Pravda* describing the CCC's investigation of a "conflict between the editors of *Pravda* and several of its staff members." At the beginning of the discussion, the comment suggested, Bukharin had

expressed his dissatisfaction to Konstantinov, the head of the party life department, over the fact that *Pravda* was publishing articles predominantly expressing the views of the Opposition. Konstantinov responded that there were no articles in the editor's files representing a different orientation. A few days later, the Politburo passed a resolution which called for the distribution to its members of the discussion articles that had not yet appeared in *Pravda*. Upon Zinoviev's request, Konstantinov sent him over one hundred articles that had just arrived at the editorial offices. Zinoviev selected four articles from the group (naturally, written in a spirit he found acceptable) and proposed that Popov, the secretary of *Pravda's* editorial board, publish them immediately. Konstantinov refused to carry out the resultant order from Popov, however, on the grounds that Zinoviev's interference in the business of the department entrusted to him was "arm-twisting," which contradicted the resolution of 5 December. When *Pravda* published one of these articles without his consent, Konstantinov announced his resignation from the editorial board. After this, the editors at *Pravda*, in an agreement with the CC, then invited Nazaretian, who proceeded to demand that Vigiliansky, the deputy head of the party life department, forward to him "not only articles, but comments, resolutions, and the like." Vigiliansky expressed surprise: on what basis was Nazaretian, who was "not affiliated with *Pravda* in any way, ... interfering in the business of the editorial board?"

Following a seven-hour discussion with Bukharin over the conflict, Vigiliansky issued a statement to the editorial board at *Pravda*, in which he declared: "When I asked why comrade Konstantinov was no longer working at *Pravda*, comrades Bukharin and Popov informed me that 'Comrade Konstantinov demanded that the discussion proceed according to his wishes; the *Pravda* discussion was directed against the CC.'" After this exchange, Vigiliansky also announced his resignation from *Pravda*.

In reviewing this "incident," the Central Control Commission concluded:

Comrades Konstantinov and Vigiliansky obviously wanted, and tried in every way, to transform *Pravda* into an organ which reports on party life in a one-sided manner, with the goal of influencing party public opinion in the spirit of the tendency which they themselves support.

Further on, the CCC expressed its position unambiguously: “An organ of the CC cannot fail to carry out the CC line in a clearly defined manner.” The CCC took into consideration *Pravda*’s declaration that “it had published 44 percent of the discussion articles written by the Opposition, the relative weight of which, not only in the party, but in the editors’ portfolio, was considerably less.” As a result of this conflict, Nazaretian assumed nearly complete power in the department of party life, through which the party was informed of the results of the voting in the discussion.

In May 1924, the journal *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* [Socialist Herald] published a declaration by Trotsky, Piatakov, and Radek that had been submitted to the Politburo at the end of December. The statement read:

It is all too obvious that if the regime of forgeries which now prevails in the party department of *Pravda* is not ended immediately, then it will inevitably deliver the severest of blows to the party through the despicable acts that are carried out against it, although done so in its name. It is useless to speak of party democracy if a forgery replaces party information without being punished. We demand:

1) To instruct a commission, with a deadline of no more than twenty-four hours, to investigate the facts we have provided; 2) To immediately remove comrades Nazaretian and Safronov from positions at *Pravda*; 3) To declare categorically that no comrade who submits essential information to the commission will be subjected to party or any other form of repression.⁸

1. *Правда*, 1990, 5 мая [*Pravda*, 5 May 1990].

2. *Правда*, 1923, 15 декабря [*Pravda*, 15 December 1923].

3. Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 80 [Boris Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, p. 80].

4. Там же [Ibid.].

5. *Правда*, 1923, 16 декабря [*Pravda*, 16 December 1923].

6. *Правда*, 1924, 12 января [*Pravda*, 12 January 1924].

7. *Правда*, 1924, 15 января [*Pravda*, 15 January 1924].

[8.](#) *Социалистический вестник*, 1924, 28 мая, № 11 (81), С. 8 [*Socialist Herald*, 28 May 1924, № 11 (81), p. 8].

Молодежь Р. С. Ф. С. Р.



Рабфаковцы.

Two groups where the Left Opposition had considerable support: “Rabfakovtsy,” young workers studying to enter higher education (above), and soldiers in the Red Army (below).



В читальне 3а чтением газеты.

23. The Mechanics of the Apparatus

It was much more difficult to commit similar forgeries in Moscow, where the discussion proceeded in a more democratic form. Party histories written prior to the *Short Course of the RCP(B)* included the results of several votes in the Moscow organization. At meetings of workers' cells, 9,843 votes were cast for the CC, 2,223 for the Opposition; at meetings of student cells, the CC received only 2,790 votes, while the Opposition received 6,594.¹ It should be noted that the greater part of communist-students at that time were from the working class and had actively participated in the civil war. The results of votes taken at meetings of military and administrative cells resulted in nearly the same proportion as in the student cells. Among delegates elected to regional conferences in Moscow, 1,708 voted for the CC, while 878 — or more than one-third — voted for the Opposition. However, at the Moscow city conference, merely 25 percent of the Opposition's supporters were present. The Opposition demanded that the Moscow Committee be elected in such a way that it included supporters of various tendencies in the party, in proportion to the relative weight of these supporters in the party's city organization; however, the newly selected Moscow Committee was completely "homogeneous," that is, it consisted exclusively of supporters of the majority!

Even before the discussion had concluded, Stalin was taking organizational measures through the secretariat of the CC to remove a number of leading oppositionists from administrative posts. The removal of Antonov-Ovseenko from his position as director of the Political

Directorate of the Red Army [PUR], in particular, caused a great deal of commotion.

Reflecting the opinion of communists in the army, where the Opposition found a great number of supporters, Antonov-Ovseenko published a circular on 24 December, in which he proposed that political organs be required to answer to party organizations in the military sector and that the confirmation of secretaries in army cells by political organs be rejected.²

Three days later, Antonov-Ovseenko sent a letter to both the CCC Presidium and the Politburo, announcing that “communists in the military are now saying that everyone must support comrade Trotsky unanimously.” Such sentiments arose in reaction to the demagogic speeches against Trotsky by, in particular, leading officials in the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. Thus in his speech at a regional party meeting in Kharkov, when Petrovsky declared that Trotsky’s political line throughout the entire course of his revolutionary activity was incorrect and harmful, the military section of the meeting spontaneously shouted, “Long live comrade Trotsky!” and “Down with the speaker!”

Antonov-Ovseenko emphasized that the demagogic campaign of the apparatus had been prompted by Stalin’s article³ and by leading articles in *Pravda*, which had mobilized

the nastiest prejudices that had existed among Bolsheviks during the old pre-revolutionary struggle — in order to isolate comrade Trotsky from the old Bolsheviks and to deprive him of serious support in the party as he was propagating his views ... These reckless and unprincipled attacks, directed against the person who among the broad masses is considered without



Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko
(1883–1938)

question to be the leader — the organizer and inspirer of the revolution's victories — creates painful alarm, disorder, and uncertainty ... Instead of a serious analysis of serious questions, the party and the whole country are being fed with personal attacks, suspicions, malicious slander, and this method is becoming a system.⁴

At the conclusion of his letter, Antonov-Ovseenko wrote:

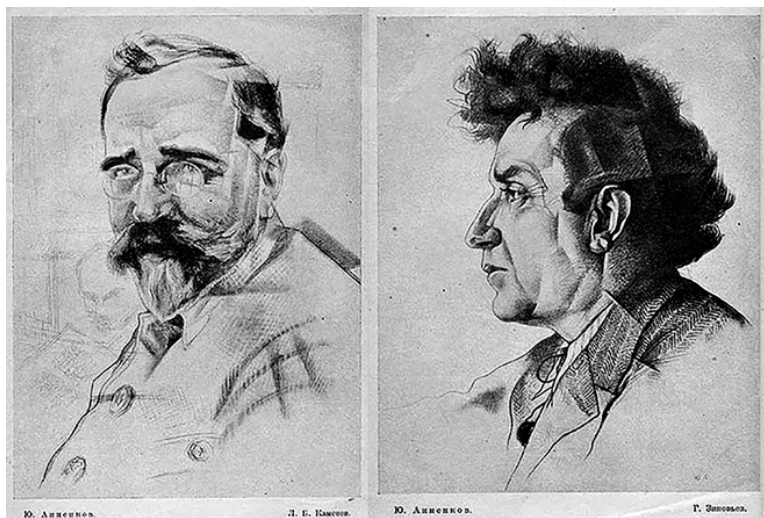
I realize that my voice of caution will not make the slightest impression upon those who consider the leaders chosen by history to be infallible. You should know, however, that this voice is symptomatic; it expresses the indignation of those who throughout their entire lives have attempted to prove their selfless devotion to the interests of the party as a whole and to the interests of the communist revolution ... And at some point their voice will call to order those “leaders” who have gone too far, and do so in such a way that these “leaders” will hear it, despite their extreme factional deafness.⁵

On 12 January the Orgburo of the CC decided that it was no longer possible for Antonov-Ovseenko to continue his work as the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army. Speaking at a plenum of the CC on 15 January, Antonov-Ovseenko declared:

I insist on absolute clarity in posing the question about me. The issue is removing from his post as head of the Political Directorate a party member who has dared to speak out at a party meeting against a policy of the CC majority which is undermining party unity as well as the moral cohesion of the army ... I consider it the indisputable right of a party member to indicate to CC members any danger of one kind or another in the party's situation ... My letter of 27 December contains no threat, other than to influence factionally-inclined leaders, through an official party conference or congress, from the standpoint of party-minded comrades ... I am by no means mistaken that this widespread campaign has received its specific tone from none other than comrade Stalin.⁶

In his speech at the Thirteenth Party Conference, Stalin indirectly confirmed the correctness of this allegation; among the reasons he gave for the removal of Antonov-Ovseenko as head of PUR, Stalin claimed that “he sent to the CC and the CCC a letter, altogether indecent in tone and absolutely inadmissible in content, threatening the CC and CCC that ‘the leaders who have gone too far’ would be called to account.”⁷

At the January Plenum of the CC preceding the Thirteenth Conference, Zinoviev made particularly offensive remarks against leaders of the Opposition, setting the tone for their further persecution by the apparatchiki. According to the informational bulletin about its work, the Plenum “summarized the results of the party discussion, during which a number of CC members from the provinces sharply and categorically condemned the line of the Opposition (Trotsky, Radek, Piatakov, and others) about legalizing factions and groupings in the party, about setting the apparatus against the party, etc.”⁸ Thus, even before the party conference, which was supposed to draw the results of the discussion, three members of the Central Committee, including one member of the Politburo, were publicly accused of anti-party views.



Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev as drawn by Yuri Annenkov

The leaders of the majority themselves were well aware that the victory over the Opposition had been achieved by using purely bureaucratic and demagogic methods. Bukharin wrote to Zinoviev soon after the conclusion of the discussion:

I'm very afraid that you may be carried away by the victory, by the fact that we managed "to bring down the superman" (that is, Trotsky – V. R.) who was leading us along an incorrect course, and so forth. Our thought may be clouded in particular by the circumstance that we managed to do what even Ilyich failed to do. I ask that you not over-estimate either the *degree*, or the *character*, or the *solidity* of the victory. We fought, in essence, only in Moscow. We held in our hands the entire *apparatus*. We controlled the press, and so forth. Finally, we held in our hands — and this is very important — the idea of the unity and continuity of party tradition, which we personified ourselves. Yet the opposition in Moscow turned out to be rather significant, to say the least.⁹

"Victory" in the discussion, which objectively paved the road to Stalin's complete power, was achieved in large part due to the efforts of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Only after having been driven into the subsequent opposition by Stalin and his new supporters, did Zinoviev and Kamenev finally recognize the consequences for them of the position they had taken in the 1923 discussion. Two and a half years later, Zinoviev described the discussion as "a sad period."

Rather than uniting together against Stalin and his friends, we — two groups of real proletarian revolutionaries, — because of a number of uncertainties in the party situation, beat one another over the head for two years ... We now say that there can be no doubt that the basic core of the Opposition in 1923, as has been shown by the evolution of the faction now in charge, correctly warned about the dangers of a shift away from a proletarian line and about the ominous growth of the bureaucratic regime ... Yes, on the issue of the downward slide and of the bureaucratic apparatus clamping down, Trotsky proved to be right against you.¹⁰

The declaration of the United Opposition, presented at the July Plenum of 1926 and signed by Zinoviev and Kamenev along with other oppositionists, stated:

Dozens and hundreds of leaders from the 1923 opposition, including many old worker-Bolsheviks, tempered in struggle, alien to careerism and obsequiousness, and in spite of their endurance and discipline, remain to this day barred from party work.¹¹

These belated acknowledgments could not, however, change the fact that it was precisely Zinoviev and Kamenev who shared responsibility

along with Stalin for the establishment of a bureaucratic regime in the party, as well as for the repression of those communists who had warned about the danger of this process.

- [1.](#) Большая советская энциклопедия, изд. 1-ое, Т. 11, М., 1930, С. 499 [*Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, First edition, Volume 11, Moscow, 1930, p. 499].
- [2.](#) Биневи́ч, Александр & Зиновий Серебрянский, *Андрей Бубнов*, Москва: Изд-во политической литературы, 1964, С. 55 [Aleksandr Binevich & Zinovii Serebrianskii, *Andrei Bubnov*, Moscow: Publisher of Political Literature, 1964, p. 55].
- [3.](#) Stalin's article was "On the Discussion, on Comrade Rafail, on the Articles by Comrades Preobrazhensky and Sapronov, and on Comrade Trotsky's Letter," published in *Pravda* on 15 December 1923 (– trans.).
- [4.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 3, С. 207 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 3, p. 207].
- [5.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [6.](#) *Вопросы истории*, 1989, № 2, С. 91–92 [*Questions of History*, 1989, № 2, pp. 91–92].
- [7.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 43 [Stalin, Works, Volume 6, p. 44].
- [8.](#) *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях*, Т. 3, 1984, С. 143. [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, 1984, p. 143].
- [9.](#) *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 5, С. 61–62 [*Questions of the History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 5, pp. 61–62].
- [10.](#) *Партия и оппозиция по документам*, М., 1927, Выпуск I, С. 23–24 [*The Party and the Opposition. Documents*, Moscow, 1927, Volume 1, pp. 23–24].
- [11.](#) *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, М., 1990, Т. II, С. 20–21 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Moscow, 1990, Volume II, pp. 20–21].

24. “The Liquidation of Any Discussion and Democracy”

Preparation for the Thirteenth Conference, which was being called for January 1924 to determine the results of the discussion, was done in such a way that not a single communist who had spoken in the course of the discussion in support of the Opposition was selected with a deciding vote.

At the conference itself, leaders of the Opposition described with alarm the methods used by the majority during the contentious discussion. Preobrazhensky recalled that “with regard to the national question, comrade Lenin stated in a letter (which for some reason still remains unknown to the party) that animosity in politics is the very worst phenomenon.” Preobrazhensky also said:

I think that the fundamental mistake permitted by the Politburo in its personal attitude to comrade Trotsky, is that the CC treats comrade Trotsky like a stranger in our Bolshevik milieu. Such an attitude makes cooperative work impossible. ... Here we see at work, to a much greater degree, elemental emotions and recollections, rather than political calculations of party leaders who should know that on this question they must consider political interests above others.¹

In his speech, Preobrazhensky pointed out that “over the course of six years in our party, not a single group has left the party; and it is completely absurd to think that someone may leave the party.”² The danger of a split issued from the activity of the CC majority, who were

making attempts, never before tried in the party, to force into a grouping a section of the party not wishing to go there.

Addressing the Central Committee majority, Radek declared:

You pose the question of removing comrades in the Opposition from their posts. This example, given by the party from above, will spread throughout the entire party down to its lowest party cells. ... And you are inviting ... hypocrisy in the party, when people will conceal their thoughts in order to avoid such consequences.³

Yet the conference failed to hear these voices of warning against the methods of inner-party struggle that several years later would pointedly be directed against many representatives of the current majority.

The conference also witnessed the first use of a crude factional tactic that would often be employed against subsequent oppositions at future party forums. At that time, speeches at party congresses and conferences were not, as a rule, read aloud from prepared texts. Therefore, as Oppositionists delivered their speeches to the Thirteenth Conference, they were frequently interrupted by loud retorts that were intended to disrupt their train of thought. In response to such retorts, Ivan Vrachev said:

Comrades, since we may have only several hours of full democracy remaining, please allow me to utilize them ... In particular I ask — and this particular question is of enormous significance for our entire party, our country and for the world proletarian movement — to which tactic does the CC intend to adhere with regard to comrade Trotsky? Will it move, here at this meeting, as before, to isolate this outstanding member of our party or not? Allow comrade Stalin to give us clear and simple answers to these clear and simple questions. And at the Thirteenth Congress we will find out if the CC fulfills what its general secretary says. (Lominadze: “We won’t have to listen to you”). It is possible that you may not have to listen — I do not even have any doubt about that.⁴

To counter Stalin’s draft resolution, Preobrazhensky presented his own draft, which demanded “to remove from the discussion all personal aspects that poison the discussion and strike at the authority of the party in the eyes of the non-party masses.” Preobrazhensky’s draft stated:

The extraordinary delay in implementing the necessary change in the party course has imparted to the turn itself a severely administrative aspect, which has made it easier for the conservative elements of the party to pay lip service to the new course while undertaking a relentless struggle against it in practice. The principal weapon in this struggle is to charge with “factionalism” all those who criticize the activity of the leading institutions and who call for a renewal of the party apparatus. Criticism of the old bureaucratic course, which has not been outlived, as well as criticism of the unsystematic economic policy, were declared to be attempts to undermine the authority and significance of the party’s CC. It is all too obvious that the acceptance of such a bureaucratic and fundamentally deceptive point of view would mean, in practice — in view of the extremely centralized character of the leadership in all questions — the liquidation of any discussion and democracy.⁵

Preobrazhensky emphasized, moreover, that such a chain of events would inevitably lead to “an increase in the number of mechanical measures employed by the party leadership on a narrow basis, which in the near future would lead to another, even sharper crisis in the party itself.”⁶

This lamentable prognosis was fully confirmed in the course of the entire subsequent inner-party struggle.

In the resolutions of the conference, the platform of the Opposition, which was an attempt to implement political reform, was evaluated as “the clear expression of a petty-bourgeois deviation.” Similar political labels would subsequently seal the fate of every new opposition.

The party moved still another step closer toward a split at the conference when Stalin disclosed the seventh point of the Tenth Congress resolution on party unity. In the future, Stalin attached a very broad interpretation to this point and threatened to use it against the leaders of every new opposition. This point was applied in practice for the first time in 1927, when all the leaders of the Opposition were expelled from the CC and CCC before the party congress; later it was widely used right up to the February–March Plenum of the CC in 1937, after which expulsions and arrests of CC members began to be carried out without convening a plenum or even polling members of the CC.

As Vrachev recalls, following the conference Kamenev said to one of the leading Oppositionists, M. S. Boguslavsky: “We gave you a good

beating, didn't we? You really failed — the party went with us." Boguslavsky answered: "History will tell," to which Kamenev in turn responded cynically, "Remember now and forever — what history tells will depend on how and by whom history is written."²

In his concluding speech at the conference, Kamenev once again declared his "complete certainty" that:

When Vladimir Ilyich returns to the leadership of our party, he will approve the difficult work and the resolution of problems that the party, true to the legacy of Vladimir Ilyich, has carried out in his absence. Vladimir Ilyich is recovering. At the moment when comrade Lenin returns to his post, our party and our CC will become a hundred times stronger than now; but even now we are strong enough to declare to the enemy that their hopes for a split, a collapse, and the disintegration of our party are unfounded, and that here they are deceiving themselves as they have done several times before.⁸

In this case, the tragic irony of history consisted not only in the fact that these words were repudiated by the entire subsequent development of events, but that they were said only two days prior to Lenin's death.

^{1.} Тринадцатая конференция Российской Коммунистической партии (большевиков). Бюллетень, М., 1924, С. 110 [*Thirteenth Conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*. Bulletin, Moscow, 1924, p. 110].

^{2.} Там же, С. 111 [*Ibid.*, p. 111].

^{3.} Там же, С. 136 [*Ibid.*, p. 136].

^{4.} Там же, С. 130 [*Ibid.*, p. 130].

^{5.} Там же, С. 181 [*Ibid.*, p. 181].

^{6.} Там же [*Ibid.*].

^{7.} *Аргументы и факты*, 1989, № 28 [*Arguments and Facts*, 1989, № 28].

^{8.} Тринадцатая конференция Российской Коммунистической партии (большевиков). Бюллетень, С. 189 [*Thirteenth Conference*, p. 189].

25. “Psychological Murder”

In spite of the victory of the Central Committee majority over the Opposition at the Thirteenth Conference, a crucial question still remained unanswered in the party: would Lenin be able to recover and return to the leadership of the party? If so, then how would he react to the results of the discussion and in general to the changes that had occurred in the party? Even at memorial meetings at the end of January 1924, speakers were often asked, “Did Lenin know about the most recent discussion? What were his relations with Trotsky?”

These very questions arose and continue to do so today for any researcher turning to the dramatic events at the end of 1923 and the beginning of 1924. At first glance, it is not possible for us to answer these questions with any degree of certainty, when studying Lenin’s tragic situation at the time. Despite being fully conscious, Lenin was unable either to speak (due to the loss of his speech) or to record his thoughts (due to the paralysis in his right arm). Leonid Krasin wrote:

His state was literally that of a person for whom understandable events are taking place before his eyes, and he senses the approach of some kind of misfortune. He sees all this and knows how to help, or how to avert the crisis, but he is unable to communicate with others. He can neither write to them nor speak out about what he sees and knows.¹

Although the picture presented by Krasin, who was not privy to the intimate life of the inhabitants of Gorki, is basically correct, it must be made much more precise. N. Petrenko, the author of a much more serious work on Lenin’s last months, presents a different picture. Based

on thorough analysis and comparison of a multitude of memoirs, N. Petrenko shows that, although Lenin was deprived of the ability to speak and write, he still possessed a sufficiently rich arsenal of ways to communicate that were comprehensible to his partners.²

Krupskaya showed the best understanding of Lenin's thoughts — both because, more than anyone else, she knew his character and his manner of thinking, and because she communicated with him during his illness more than others. In her memoirs of Lenin's final months, Krupskaya wrote:

Once he began to engage in study, Vladimir Ilyich soon determined that he could read to himself. And then (that was on August 10) he insisted he be given the newspaper. He read the paper daily, right up to the day of his death; at first he read *Pravda*, then he would read through *Izvestiia*, as well. We feared greatly that the newspaper might upset him, but to take the paper away from Ilyich, to deprive him of his contact with the world, was unthinkable. We established a set of rules; after Vladimir Ilyich looked over the paper himself, I would then read to him telegrams, the lead article, and other articles as well, according to his instructions. On his own, he began to orient himself in the newspaper very quickly, to the great surprise of the doctors, and did not overlook anything essential ... Vladimir Ilyich listened very carefully, sometimes asking questions. The newspaper thus facilitated my ability to discern the questions on Vladimir Ilyich's mind. It was possible to guess correctly because when you share a life with another, you know what kind of questions will arise from certain associations. ... Thus developed our own particular means of communication.³

Along with newspapers, the latest books were also sent to Gorki. Lenin looked through the arriving parcels and selected the books that interested him. Among these books, Krupskaya named the works of Trotsky and literature pertaining to the party discussion. During his trip to Moscow on 18–19 November 1923, Lenin selected from his Kremlin apartment a number of books, among which were also Trotsky's works. During the final month of his life, Lenin read Trotsky's *Problems of Everyday Life* and asked Krupskaya to read him a passage from another of Trotsky's books that characterized Marxism and Leninism. "It seems to me," Krupskaya wrote directly following this episode, "that Lenin was beginning to approach many issues in a different way, as if he were

observing them from afar and drawing some set of conclusions; he would read, re-read once again and then became engrossed in thought.”⁴ Finally, on the day prior to Lenin’s death, Krupskaya read to him the pamphlet, *The New Course*, which had just been published. Reporting several of these facts to Trotsky in her letter of 28 January 1924, Krupskaya added: “Lenin’s feelings toward you, which developed when you came to us in London from Siberia, never changed to the end of his life.”⁵

The memoirs of Krupskaya and many others testify to the intense interest that Lenin showed toward the discussion. Several of those who communicated with him at the time indicate in their recollections that reports on the discussion upset him and caused a noticeable worsening of his mood.

In light of all that has been said, and also taking into account Lenin’s behavior at the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923, it is possible to reconstruct his inner state during his acquaintance with the material of the discussion. Lenin could not help but understand that, during the course of the ever-sharpening discussion, a split in the party was becoming a fact; that the representatives of the majority were impermissibly misusing his name; that the development of the discussion and its results were strengthening the positions of the “troika,” and, above all, of Stalin; and that the section of the party defending ideas close to his conception of political reform was being subjected to ostracism. In other words, the very turn of events that he warned against in his final articles and letters — the most important of which remained unknown to the party — was in fact taking place. Apparently, it was precisely in these days that Lenin passed on to Krupskaya his strong wish that the “Testament,” in case of his death, would be immediately made known at the next party congress.

A letter from Krupskaya and Ulyanova to the CC on 21 December 1923 vividly expresses Lenin’s reaction to the discussion:

Seeing that the discussion in the newspaper agitates Vladimir Ilyich and thus might worsen his condition, but also that it is impossible not to give him the newspaper, we request that the articles from the discussion henceforth be moved to a Discussion Bulletin.⁶

The following day, the Politburo passed the following resolution in response to the statement by Krupskaya and Ulyanova:

a) To decide in advance the transfer of the discussion from the pages of *Pravda* to the pages of a Discussion Bulletin; b) To instruct the Plenum of the CC to set the date of the transfer; c) Before this transfer, to once again affirm the necessity of conducting the discussion in the calmest and most objective tones, excluding any intensification whatsoever; d) To report this resolution to the editorial board of *Pravda* and other party organs where the discussion is being conducted.⁷

However, the CC Plenum, which was supposed to determine the “date of the transfer,” took place only on 14–15 January 1924, and prior to this, the majority continued the discussion in still sharper and more tendentious tones. On 28 December, simultaneous with the appearance of Trotsky’s second discussion article, *Pravda* published the first in a series of editorial articles, “Down with Factionalism (the Response of *Pravda*’s Editors to Comrade Trotsky),” written by Bukharin and containing particularly coarse and dishonest attacks on Trotsky.

On 8 January 1924, an announcement in *Pravda* about Trotsky’s state of health could not have helped but cause Lenin to be newly alarmed. The article noted that Trotsky had contracted influenza on 5 November. In view of his feverish condition and the prolonged character of his illness, which could assume a more serious form, Trotsky was being granted leave with full release from all duties for a period of not less than two months in order to undergo a special climatic treatment.

Relatively few persons, mainly from his closest circle and in the party leadership, knew that Trotsky was truly ill. People who were distant from Kremlin life suspected that this report, which appeared at a moment of severe attacks on Trotsky and when the victory of his opponents in the discussion seemed certain, concealed that Trotsky had in fact been exiled. An entry on that day in the diary of the writer Mikhail Bulgakov, for example, suggests the impression that the report made on him: “Commentary on this historical bulletin is unnecessary. So, on 8 January 1924, Trotsky was forced out. What will happen to Russia, God only knows. May God help her.”⁸

Lenin might have held similar suspicions that Trotsky had been “forced out.” Based upon his own personal experience, Lenin knew what kind of intrigues the triumvirate was capable of, and he had become used to the fact that genuine information was being hidden from him, or that it was coming to him in distorted form.

The next psychological blow to Lenin was delivered by reports on the course and results of the Thirteenth Conference, which conclusively confirmed the defeat of the Opposition.

Krupskaya recalled that she “greatly feared the party discussion (from the standpoint of its potential effect on Lenin’s health – V. R.). But Vladimir Ilyich wanted to become familiar with at least its basic documents, and only when the party conference began, he asked me to read to him the entire transcript. When on Saturday, 19 January, Vladimir Ilyich clearly began to become upset, I told him that the resolutions had passed unanimously. We spent Saturday and Sunday reading the resolutions.”²

In their works devoted to the mystery surrounding Lenin’s death, more serious historians note the proximity in time of Lenin’s acquaintance with the conference resolutions and the onset of his death the next day. When considering two versions of a possible crime by Stalin — “medical murder” (which we will discuss in the following chapter) and “psychological murder” — historians frequently tend to favor the second version.

In confirmation of the second version, A. Avtorkhanov recalls that long before Lenin’s death, “knowing his goal and his task clearly, Stalin ... countermanded Lenin’s medical routine, but strictly made sure that Lenin did not travel to Moscow (for one such trip by Lenin to the Kremlin and to an agricultural exhibition in October 1923, Stalin threatened him with disciplinary action on behalf of the Politburo). Stalin also made sure that Lenin did not meet with Trotsky.”¹⁰

Stalin could not fail to understand that Lenin, upon gaining access to official information (current newspapers and journals, the stenographic record of the Twelfth Congress, etc.), would inevitably become alarmed

because the inner life of the party was developing in a direction that he considered most dangerous for its fate.

We must also agree with Avtorkhanov that Lenin received the greatest psychological blow, a blow of enormous explosive force, from Stalin's speeches at the Thirteenth Party Conference, which were anti-Trotskyist in form, but anti-Leninist in essence. Another blow was from the conference resolution of 19 January 1924, which condemned Trotsky, and the Opposition as a whole, for their "petty-bourgeois deviation."

Lenin, an experienced reader of both the Soviet and foreign press, saw in *Pravda* that his fears had already been realized: Stalin, in effect, had already seized power over the CC and had begun to abuse it. If on 20 January Lenin was merely "alarmed" (by the conference resolutions that were read to him – V. R.), then on 21 January at 18.50 hours, he suffered the final, fatal blow.¹¹

1. Cf. Кремнев, Б., Красин, М., 1968, С. 230 [B. Kremnev, Krasin, Moscow, 1968, p. 230].

2. Петренко, Н., «Ленин в Горках–Болезнь и смерть», в сборнике: *Минувшее. Исторический альманах*, М., 1990, Т. 2, С. 174–175 [N. Petrenko, "Lenin in Gorki–Illness and Death," in: *The Past. Historical Almanac*, Moscow, 1990, Volume 2, pp. 174–175].

3. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 4, С. 173 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1989, № 4, N. K. Krupskaya, "The Last Six Months of Vladimir Ilyich's Life," 3 February 1924, p. 173].

4. Там же [Ibid.].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 484 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 510].

6. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 3, С. 204 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 3, "N. K. Krupskaya and M. I. Ulyanova to the CC RKP(b)," 21 December 1923, p. 204].

7. Там же [Ibid.].

8. *Огонек*, 1989, № 51, С. 17 [*Ogonyok*, 1989, № 51, p. 17].

9. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 4, С. 173 [N. K. Krupskaya, "The Last Six Months of Vladimir Ilyich's Life," p. 173].

10. *Даугава*, 1990, № 9, С. 68 [*Daugava*, 1990, № 9, p. 68].

11. Там же [Ibid.].

26. “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin”

In addition to the version of “psychological murder,” there is one more version of Lenin’s death, first set forth by Trotsky in an article, “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin,” which was published in the American newspaper *Liberty* on 10 August 1940. Along with the report on the Politburo meeting of early 1923 mentioned above, Trotsky presented a series of important arguments to support the second version. First of all, the steady improvement of Lenin’s health from July 1923 was interrupted on 20 January 1924 by a sharp and inexplicable turn for the worse, which led one day later to his sudden death. Second, the turn occurred immediately following Trotsky’s departure for the Caucasus, from where he was unable to return in time for the funeral or — moreover — for the post-mortem examination. Third, Stalin, well aware of the improvements in Lenin’s health, in January 1924 had more of an interest than ever before in his death.

In support of the first argument, Trotsky referred to his many conversations with Doctor F. A. Guétier, who treated both Lenin and him:

“Fyodor Aleksandrovich, can this really be the end?” – my wife and I asked him more than once.

“It is impossible to say. Vladimir Ilyich might get back on his feet again — his organism is strong.”

“What about his mental faculties?”

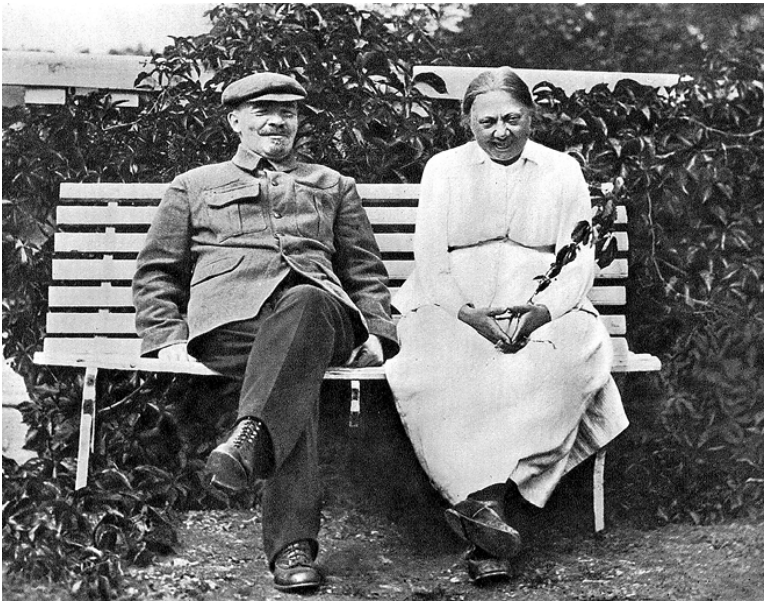
“For the most part they will remain unaffected. Perhaps not every note will retain its former purity, but the virtuoso will remain a virtuoso.”¹

Among all the doctors who treated Lenin, Guétier had the best opportunities to monitor his health. According to Dobrogaev, another of Lenin’s doctors, Lenin usually developed a negative attitude toward his doctors, who therefore had to monitor the patient in relative secrecy by observing him from the adjacent room or by questioning Nadezhda Krupskaya, Mariya Ulyanova (Lenin’s sister), Lenin’s nurses, or the medical attendants about Lenin’s health. “Only one of the physicians, F. A. Guétier, did not elicit this negative reaction from the patient, and this made it possible for him to observe the patient more directly and systematically.”²

Trotsky wrote that Stalin’s confidence surged after March 1923:

Stalin acted as if Lenin were already dead. But the patient deceived his expectations. The powerful organism, supported by his unbending will, held its own. Toward winter Lenin slowly began to get better ... The doctors’ reports became more and more encouraging.³

The twelve-volume biographical chronicle of Lenin’s life confirms Trotsky’s words: by mid-July 1923, Lenin’s health slowly but surely began to improve. On 30 July, Zinoviev reported in letters to Kamenev and Stalin that he “had received Foerster’s letter, which is *very* joyous and optimistic. A resolution of the process in his brain is taking place — it’s now much, much better. Let’s hope so. ... A great improvement.”⁴



Vladimir Lenin and Nadezhda Krupskaya at Gorki

By mid-August, the constant duty of the doctors at Lenin's bedside was canceled, and by September, the nurses were removed as well. On 10 August, in response to Lenin's unrelenting requests, the doctors allowed him to read. From this day until the final day of his life, he looked through newspapers, journals, and books, watched films, and thus remained up to date with the main events of political life. In November he traveled to Moscow, hosted a delegation of workers, and met with party comrades (Preobrazhensky, Piatnitsky, Voronsky, Krestinsky, Skvortsov-Stepanov), who informed him of domestic and international events. (The ripening of the revolutionary situation in Germany particularly attracted Lenin's attention and even inspired him). By the end of November, Professor Bekhterev, who was invited for a consultation, found that, since the first time he had observed Lenin in the spring of 1923, his health had improved significantly.

Krupskaya's letters to people close to her also testify to the steady improvement of Lenin's health:

What has been accomplished over the last month usually takes months. His mood is very good; he now sees for himself that he is recovering (2 September)... The doctors are hoping for a full recovery; Vladimir Ilyich has regained his health almost completely now; he feels relatively well physically, he follows the newspapers attentively, as well as the latest literature, both Soviet and White-Guard, although he is still unable to work (4 January 1924).⁵

According to Krupskaya, only on 17 January, "it began to feel as if something was coming on; Vladimir Ilyich looked terribly weary and exhausted. He often closed his eyes and turned somewhat pale. More importantly, the expression of his face changed somehow, so that it began to resemble that of a blind man."⁶ On 19 January, Lenin began to complain that his vision was deteriorating; on the following day, however, professor Averbakh, who arrived to examine him, discovered no changes in his condition. On 21 January, when a sharp deterioration in Lenin's health became obvious, from four p.m. on, the doctors treating him and the visiting professors began to hold non-stop consultations at his bedside. The final consultation took place fifteen minutes prior to Lenin's sudden descent into unconsciousness. Death ensued one hour and twenty minutes later.

Let us now review Trotsky's other arguments that support the version that Lenin was poisoned.

Reports from Gorki at the beginning of 1924 stated that the prospect of Lenin's recovery and perhaps even his partial return to political life were not to be excluded. Stalin could not have failed to understand that if this were true, then Lenin's interference in the course of events would most likely be directed against him, Stalin.

At this time, as in subsequent years, Stalin unabashedly revealed in his conversations with his closest allies his offensive tendencies and treacherous designs. After his break with Stalin, Kamenev related to Trotsky an "intimate conversation" that Stalin had with him and Dzerzhinsky in 1923. Stalin said that "nothing in life is sweeter than to

take careful aim at one's enemy, to prepare everything thoroughly, to take merciless revenge against him, then to go to sleep.”⁷

The memoirs of Galina Serebriakova indicate that this “intimate conversation” became known to other party leaders as well. She recalls that her husband, G. Ia. Sokolnikov, described the episode to her in approximately the same words. According to Serebriakova, a circle of people wider than Trotsky mentioned, including Sokolnikov, participated in the “men’s get-together” where Stalin uttered these words.⁸

At the beginning of 1924, the main danger for Stalin was not Trotsky, whose influence in the party had declined in the preceding months, but Lenin, if, of course, he managed to overcome his illness and intervene in party affairs. Lenin’s authority had increased even more during the party discussion: people appealed to his name and both of the opposing sides made references to him. It was at this time that the concept of “Leninism” first began to circulate widely in the party. Lenin’s position with regard to Stalin, which had already become clear to the initiated at the beginning of 1923, became unambiguously irreconcilable. Lenin’s voice might undermine all the “victories” secured by the “troika” and, above all, by Stalin during the time when Lenin was cut off from the leadership of the party.

The version presented in the article “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin” has often been discussed in historical literature. Noting that this article appeared in print ten days prior to Trotsky’s murder, Avtorkhanov reasoned that Stalin issued the order to hasten the assassination in order to prevent Trotsky’s further revelations. This argument is highly plausible, since reports in the foreign press could not have failed to reach Stalin that Trotsky was working on a book entitled *Stalin* and was planning to release it soon.

In his commentary on the account of the discussion around Lenin’s request for poison, as described in “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin,” Avtorkhanov wrote:

It is difficult to find in history politicians who, when plotting a crime, managed in advance to construct an alibi as solid as that constructed by Stalin. One can be sure that Stalin did not give poison to Lenin, but Stalin

openly warned the Politburo: “Keep your eyes open — I, of course, would not give Lenin poison, but Lenin is searching for it himself and he who seeks shall find! In his family, among his friends, visitors (in spite of a ‘medical quarantine,’ nearly everyone visited Lenin except Trotsky), someone might be found who will give him poison out of compassion.” If poison is detected during the post-mortem examination, then Stalin will say, “There, you see, what did I tell you?” Stalin was not a petty dodger and crook, but rather what he was called during his life: a coryphaeus. He was a luminary, however, in the science of crime and in the art of concealing it. Yet Stalin lived neither during the era of the Roman empire, when Nero, his spiritual precursor, barely concealed that he murdered his own mother, nor during the Middle Ages, when tyrants resorted to poison rather amateurishly. Stalin lived in an epoch when poisons were perfected and administered in such scrupulous doses that a victim might die over the course of weeks, or, if necessary, even years.²

Although distinguished by his pathological anti-communism, the psychological accuracy of Avtorkhanov’s analysis of Stalin’s character and behavior cannot be denied. As far as one can judge by the preceding quotation, Avtorkhanov believed that Stalin did not hand over poison to Lenin, but secretly made use of it so that Lenin would die slowly. Avtorkhanov also cites discussions among party circles in Georgia during the 1920s to the effect that Lenin either was poisoned by Stalin or committed suicide with poison given to him by Stalin.

Authors discussing Trotsky’s version usually have raised the question about why he decided to reveal it publicly only in 1940. The reason is that Trotsky based all of his exposures of Stalin’s crimes on a thorough analysis of facts and documents, not on intuitive suppositions or suspicions. Trotsky concluded that Lenin could have been poisoned by Stalin only after he had analyzed the official transcripts of the Moscow trials of 1936–1938, which convinced him that not all of the testimony given at the trials amounted to simple fabrications. In several instances, people spoke of genuine crimes committed on Stalin’s orders but presented as those carried out by his enemies. After reviewing the material of these trials, commissions of the 1950s and 1960s lent further support to Trotsky’s argument that many of the falsifications at the trials were in fact transformations of Stalin’s own acts or designs.

“The ideas raised in the article did not develop in my mind immediately,” Trotsky wrote in “Super-Borgia in the Kremlin.”

When they first arose, I dismissed them as the product of excessive suspiciousness; but the Moscow trials, which revealed behind the back of the Kremlin dictator a hellish kitchen of intrigues, falsifications, poisonings, and murders on the sly, cast a sinister light on the preceding years as well. I began to ask myself more persistently: what in fact was Stalin's true role during the period of Lenin's illness? Did the student not take measures of one kind or another to hasten the death of the teacher?^{[10](#)}

Whether or not Stalin handed poison to Lenin while telling him that the doctors expressed no hope for his recovery, or whether he resorted to more direct measures, I do not know. I do know, however, that Stalin was unable to wait passively while his fate was hanging by a thread, and when the solution depended merely on a small, very small movement of his hand.^{[11](#)}

Trotsky also considered that his exchanges with Stalin via telegraph on the day following Lenin's death was a rather important fact supporting his argument. An encoded telegram announcing Lenin's death reached Trotsky at the train station in Tbilisi. He immediately sent a telegram to the Kremlin: “I consider it necessary to return to Moscow. When is the funeral?” Trotsky received the response about an hour later:

The funeral will be on Saturday — you will not be able to arrive in time. The Politburo feels that, because of the state of your health, you must travel to Sukhum. – Stalin.^{[12](#)}

Only a few days later Trotsky learned that, in actual fact, the funeral had been scheduled for Sunday. Trotsky attributed Stalin's lie not only to the “troika's” desire to prevent Trotsky from taking part in Lenin's funeral, but also to more serious motivations. Trotsky wrote:

[Stalin] might have feared that I would link Lenin's death to last year's discussion of poison, that I would ask the doctors about the possibility of poisoning, or that I might insist on a special analysis. For all of these reasons, therefore, it was safer to keep me at bay until the body had been embalmed and the internal organs cremated so that no expert analysis would be possible.^{[13](#)}

Trotsky later recalled:

When I asked the doctors in Moscow about the immediate causes of death, which they had not expected,¹⁴ they shrugged their shoulders vaguely. The autopsy, of course, had been performed while observing all the necessary rituals: Stalin, as General Secretary, made sure of that before anything else! But the doctors did not look for poison, even if the more insightful among them allowed the possibility of suicide. ... They understood that politics stood over medicine. ... I renewed personal relations with Zinoviev and Kamenev only two years later, after they had broken with Stalin. They clearly avoided conversations about the circumstances surrounding Lenin's death, answering questions in monosyllables and averting their eyes. Did they know something or merely harbor suspicions? In any case, they had been too closely connected with Stalin during the previous three years and must have feared that a shadow of suspicion would fall upon them as well. A dark cloud seemed to have engulfed the story of Lenin's death. Everyone avoided discussions of it, as if fearing to acknowledge their own anxiety. Only the effusive and talkative Bukharin would occasionally, in private, drop strange and unexpected hints. "Oh, you don't know Koba" [Stalin], he would say with his frightened smile, "Koba is capable of anything."¹⁵

Several facts from Bazhanov's memoirs may be added to the foregoing observations. In the first days after Lenin's death, Stalin "is in his office and, in the presence of his secretaries ... is in a good mood and beaming. At meetings and sessions he puts on a tragically mournful, hypocritical face, makes insincere speeches, and swears with pathos to be true to Lenin. Looking at him, I cannot help but think: 'What a swine you are.'"¹⁶

1. Троцкий, Л. Д. *Портреты революционеров*, С. 71 [Leon Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, Moscow, 1991, p. 71].

2. Сб. *Минувшее*, Т. 2, С. 185 [*The Past*, Volume 2, p. 185].

3. Троцкий, Л. Д. *Портреты революционеров*, М., 1991, С. 76 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 76].

4. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 4, С. 198, 200 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 4, "G. Ye. Zinoviev to L. B. Kamenev," 30 July 1923; "G. Ye. Zinoviev to I. V. Stalin," 31 July 1923, pp. 198, 200].

5. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 4, С. 181, 184 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1989, № 4, "N. K. Krupskaya to I. A. Armand," 2 September 1923; "N. K. Krupskaya to A. M. Kalmykova," 4 January 1924, pp. 181, 184].

6. Там же, С. 174 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1989, № 4, N. K. Krupskaya, "The Last Six Months of Vladimir Ilyich's Life," 3 February 1924, p. 174].

- [7.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д. *Портреты революционеров*, С. 73 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 73].
- [8.](#) Серебрякова, Г. И., *Смерч*, М., 1988, С. 241–242 [G. I. Serebriakova, *Whirlwind*, Moscow, 1988, pp. 241–242].
- [9.](#) Даугава, 1990, № 9, С. 65 [Daugava, 1990, № 9, p. 65].
- [10.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 66 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 66].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 77 [Ibid., p. 77].
- [12.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [13.](#) Там же, С. 77–78 [Ibid., pp. 77–78].
- [14.](#) In her letter to Inna Armand on 28 January 1924, Krupskaya wrote: “The doctors did not anticipate death at all, and still did not believe it, even when the death-agony began.” *Воспоминания о В. И. Ленине в 5 тт.*, М., 1979, Т. 4, С. 339 [*Memoirs of V. I. Lenin in Five Volumes*, Moscow, 1979, Volume 4, p. 339].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 78 [Ibid., p. 78].
- [16.](#) Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 88–89 [Boris Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, pp. 88–89].

27. “The Seven”

The death of Lenin raised the hopes of both the foreign and domestic enemies of Bolshevism that the party would weaken and split. The émigré press inflated in every way possible the sharpness of the inner-party disagreements that appeared at the time. At the end of 1923, the Menshevik Fyodor Dan prophesied with unconcealed malicious delight:

The sharpness of the contradictions that have matured under the Bolshevik regime has already become so glaring, that only the inertia of the historically moribund tradition, embodied in the personality of the “leader,” continues to preserve the unstable equilibrium and prevent an explosion of the antagonisms. Lenin’s departure removes one of the most important factors preventing an active clash of the contradictory forces. When Lenin is no more, the communist spiders confined within the Kremlin tower will devour one another.¹

The SR newspaper *Rul’* [The Helm] analyzed the situation in the party more objectively. In an article entitled “Without the Leader,” an author wrote:

Fate ... removed Lenin at a most critical moment: following serious economic failures, the opposition burst into the open, and the foul troika which had replaced Lenin was loudly told to its face that it enjoyed no authority in the party, that it was deceiving the party, and that it was sacrificing everything in order to retain power in its filthy hands. This is why the death of Lenin ... is turning into an event of enormous historical importance.²

It would seem that the leadership, following Lenin’s death, should have concerned itself first of all with the consolidation of the old party guard.

In actual fact just the opposite occurred. During the parting with Lenin, as Vrachev recalls,

everyone felt as if they had been orphaned. For a time all the recent strife that had arisen in a rather sharp form at the Thirteenth Party Conference was forgotten ... Yet when Stalin became aware of the existence of such moods, the conciliatory conversations came to an end. The General Secretary did not like them.³

Immediately following Lenin's death, the "troika" began to broaden its divisive activity. It created within the Central Committee a profoundly conspiratorial faction, thereby delivering a much greater blow to party unity than any previous groupings. As Zinoviev reported several years later, this faction formed at the beginning of 1924 and received its final organizational configuration during the August Plenum of the CC of the same year at a secret meeting of the majority of members of the Central Committee. This majority resolved officially to consider itself the "leading collective" of the party and selected from within its ranks a secret Politburo, a group of "Seven," which included all the members of the official Politburo, except Trotsky (Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Stalin, Tomsky), and the Chairman of the Central Control Commission, Kuibyshev. Candidate-members to this factional organ — formed with complete disregard of party statutes — included Dzerzhinsky, Kalinin, Molotov, Uglanov, and Frunze.

The meeting produced a special document, a statute of sorts, regulating the activity of the "leading collective" or the "group of CC member-Leninists" [группа цекистов-ленинцев], as the illegal governing faction called itself. In the document, the "Seven" declared itself to be accountable only to a plenum of a "parallel CC," convened before a regular official plenum of the CC. The "Seven" discussed beforehand and essentially decided all the resolutions of the Politburo. In his letters to Molotov of 1925, Stalin often referred to "resolutions of the Seven," "discussions by the Seven," etc.⁴

Thus arose two illegal, inner-party formations that worked out factional decisions, then acted out farcical sessions of the statutory leading party organs, where these decisions invariably were accepted by a

majority of votes. The “Seven” pre-decided resolutions not only of the Politburo, but also of the Central Control Commission. In this way, the most important function of the CCC that Lenin had addressed in his last articles — averting conflicts arising within the CC — was blocked.

Explaining the reasons for the formation of this faction, Zinoviev told his co-thinkers in the Central Committee:

We must have a place of some kind in our own ranks of old Leninists, where, in discussing the most important questions in which we might have disagreements with Trotsky, we would *have the right to waver, to make mistakes, to correct one another, and collectively to work out this or that question*. With Trotsky present, we are deprived of such a possibility (my emphasis – V. R.).⁵

It is clear that the issue here concerned those inalienable rights guaranteed by party statutes to *all members of the party*. Having charged the 1923 Opposition with factionalism for defending precisely these rights belonging to all Communists, the majority of the CC and the Politburo essentially acknowledged these rights for themselves only; that is, the majority usurped the rights belonging to the entire party.

In the resolution of the Tenth Party Congress “On Party Unity,” factionalism was defined as “the appearance of groups with special platforms, who strive to a certain degree to remain isolated and to create their own group discipline.”⁶ In the activity of the “leading collective” and the “Seven,” only one of these traits was missing: the existence of a special ideological platform. The members of these secret formations consciously strove to conceal the differences existing between them in order to oppose Trotsky with a unified position. By a special secret resolution, they agreed not to polemicize openly among themselves, and also to speak out at all official sessions of the CC and the Politburo against Trotsky on all questions under discussion. The remaining signs of factionalism — isolated behavior and the existence of group discipline — were expressed in their activity in the crudest and most unprincipled form.

At the July United Plenum of the CC and the CCC in 1926, Zinoviev presented a folder of official documents of the “Seven,” which spoke

directly about the existence of a “faction of the CC plenum.” The “Seven” had created similar secret centers in republic and gubernia party organizations. A special code had been developed in order to communicate between the “leading collective” and the local factional centers. In this way a highly structured, illegal organization was created within the party. (Drawing precisely on this real experience, Stalin would subsequently fabricate, in the image of his own creation, “cases” of non-existent, illegal “Trotskyist centers”).

Every subsequent ruling faction grouped around Stalin employed similar methods. In addition, like the “Seven,” each new upper-echelon bloc, formed by means of clandestine schemes carefully concealed from the party, charged its opposition with factional-divisive activity for developing ideological platforms that criticized the line of the CC.

It is important to emphasize that the “Seven” distanced itself to a certain degree even from members of the CC who belonged to the “leading collective.” Stalin invariably succeeded in concealing from the CC plenum differences that arose among the “Seven” right up until the moment when it seemed advantageous for him to publicize them. As Mikoyan recalls, when the struggle reached the CC, Stalin often presented an ultimatum: either to settle a given issue in his favor, or he would resign. The ultimatum was made, moreover, at a moment when it seemed to the CC majority that his departure would lead to a split.² One can be sure that the creation of “Troikas” and “Sevens” was determined by the ideological weakness of their members.

They were completely preoccupied with preserving and strengthening their own unlimited power over the party, as well as with their inability to counter the arguments of the Opposition with ones of the same ideological weight. Therefore it is not accidental that the leaders of the ruling factions devoted all of their efforts to discredit leaders of the Opposition, to isolate them within the Central Committee, and then — by using the sheer strength of the majority for the organizational suppression of oppositions — to sever members of the Opposition from the party leadership and, eventually, from the party itself.



Lev Kamenev and Aleksandr Arosev, director and deputy director of the Lenin Institute

One of the first steps of the “Seven” was to establish control over all of Lenin’s documents. Kamenev’s position as head of the Lenin Institute greatly facilitated this; the Lenin Institute was officially recognized as the “single state repository for all the manuscripts of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), as well as all the original documents that relate directly to his activity.”⁸ In October 1924, the CC Secretariat created a special commission for “working out a plan and set of guidelines for the transferal of documents by individual comrades to Istpart.” According to a proposal by this commission, the CC passed a

resolution requiring all party members to submit to the CC archive all documents in their possession written by Lenin. The management of this archive was assigned to one of the main members of Stalin’s personal secretariat, Tovstukha.

Once again exhibiting the utmost party loyalty, Trotsky submitted to the Lenin Institute in 1924 all original letters from Lenin in his possession, receiving photocopies in return. The ruling faction at the time, however, did not wish in the least to exhibit such loyalty. Thus, in March 1924, evidently under instructions from the “Seven,” Yaroslavsky issued the order to seal in a packet labeled “Not to be opened before 1929” Lenin’s letter of 1917 “To All Party Members,” which contained his negative assessments of Zinoviev and Kamenev.⁹

Also during the reign of the “Seven,” the system of appointments from the top was affirmed once and for all, while the very concept of “nomenklatura,” which had never been used under Lenin, entered the lexicon of the party apparatus. Somewhat earlier, on 8 November 1923,

the CC passed a resolution requiring the *Uchraspred* of the CC to conduct a “systematic review of the upper layers of the leadership, above all with regard to positions designated in the nomenklatura.”¹⁰ Although such methods of selecting and assigning cadres — used by the apparatus and stubbornly rejected by the Opposition — had been formally condemned by the CC resolution of 5 December 1923, in practice they were even more widely applied.

At the July CC Plenum of 1953, Lazar Kaganovich recalled that in 1924 the question of a nomenklatura of senior officials was expressly reviewed in the Central Committee. During this discussion, Dzerzhinsky “expressed doubt” and even declared that the vetting of officials in a People’s Commissariat by the CC apparatus indicated a lack of trust in the People’s Commissar. To this Stalin replied, “It is absolutely necessary that the party appoints its leaders. It would be difficult for you, as People’s Commissar, to handle this work alone, and you should be grateful to the CC for this.” After this reply, Dzerzhinsky said that he was withdrawing his reservations.¹¹ The “Seven” continued to take steps to remove people close to Trotsky from leading positions in the Red Army. As Bazhanov recalled,

... These steps were taken gradually and cautiously. Individual CC members would announce to the CC that something was amiss in the Red Army. A plenum would create a “military commission” in order “to investigate the situation in the Red Army,” with Gusev as chairman. The commission would be selected in such a way that its conclusions would be clear ahead of time: its members would be Unshlikht, and Voroshilov, and Frunze, as well as the obedient Andreev and Shvernik.¹²

Previously, Trotsky had often had serious disagreements with Gusev when the latter joined the staff of the Revolutionary Military Council. In a note sent to the Politburo on 16 June 1923, Trotsky wrote:

I consider it necessary to note that the appointment of comrade Gusev to chair the Red Army commission will hardly be able to guarantee even a minimal degree of normal, productive work in that sphere. I believe that experience of the past is clear enough and does not require any proof on my part.¹³



Trotsky and Sklyansky



Muralov and Trotsky, 1923

Trotsky's objections, of course, were ignored. In 1923, Voroshilov and Lashevich were added to the Revolutionary Military Council. Then, at the beginning of 1924, on the recommendation of Gusev's commission, E. M. Sklyansky was removed from his post as First Deputy People's Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs and chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council. Sklyansky had been Trotsky's long-standing assistant since the first days of the civil war. Frunze was appointed in his place. Another "shuffling" was carried out in May 1924: in place of Nikolai Muralov, a civil war hero, co-thinker and long-time friend of Trotsky, Voroshilov was appointed commander of the Moscow military district. Muralov was reassigned to the less significant post of commander of the Northern Caucasus military district, previously occupied by Voroshilov.

Confronted with another conspiracy, this time from the "Seven" and the "faction of the CC plenum," Trotsky again failed to take steps to rally his co-thinkers around himself. He continued to limit himself to attempts to convince the Politburo majority of the correctness of his views. Such attempts, however, invariably collided with pre-designed opposition, which was becoming not only more personal, but also more socio-political in form.

I stood before these people as if I was standing before a dead wall. But that, of course, was not the main thing. Behind the ignorance, the narrow-mindedness, the stubbornness, the hostility of separate individuals, one could

almost feel with one's fingers the social features of a privileged caste, very sensitive, very perceptive, very resourceful in everything related to *its own interests*.¹⁴

Of course, not all members of the ruling faction recognized at the time that objectively they were expressing the interests of an ever-consolidating new layer of the bureaucratic apparatus. This deep social motive was concealed in their minds by a subjective motivation: a yearning to wear out and isolate Trotsky once and for all. In spite of the favorable outcome of the 1923 discussion, members of the “Seven” still perceived in Trotsky a threat to their domination over the party. As Trotsky recalled, in a personal conversation with Bukharin in 1925, the latter responded to Trotsky’s criticism of party suppression with the assertion: “We have no democracy because we are afraid of you.”

“‘Try to stop fearing me,’ I advised Bukharin, ‘and let’s work together as we should.’ But the advice was in vain.”¹⁵

Regardless of the subjective motivations of one or another member of the Politburo, they all objectively supported the policy of transforming an independent Leninist party into a Stalinist party which was under the heel of an uncontrolled bureaucracy. The activity of the “Troika” and the “Seven” in 1923–1925 essentially pre-determined the outcome of the subsequent inner-party struggle — the liquidation of the party as a viable organism — and objectively cleared the way for the establishment of Stalinism and for Stalin’s usurpation of the power of both the party and the working class.



*Four of the "Seven":
Stalin, Rykov, Zinoviev, and Bukharin*

The majority of Central Committee and Politburo members did not pass the test of power. During the periods of their alliance with Stalin, they acted in a manner just as unprincipled as Stalin himself, drifting ever further along the road toward political degeneration. Having lost the qualities of principled and honest politicians while in power, those who later broke with Stalin turned out to be incapable of preserving for long the firmness and correctness of their positions. This explains their relatively rapid capitulation before Stalin and the Stalinists, inevitably followed by their false confessions and the deceitful flattery of "the leader," which reached their apogee at the Moscow trials of 1936–1938.

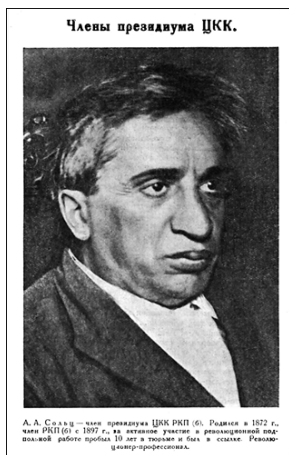
These events contain not only moral, but also political lessons of enormous historical significance: the concentration of all power in the hands of a narrow party oligarchy inevitably leads — as the entire subsequent establishment of a "collective leadership" within the Politburo

showed — to a comparatively rapid replacement of the oligarchy by a regime of personal power.

1. Социалистический вестник [Socialist Herald], 1923, №13–14.
2. Cited in: Родина, 1990, № 4, С. 7 [Motherland, 1990, № 4, p. 7].
3. Вечерняя Москва, 1990, 22 января [Evening Moscow, 22 January 1990].
4. Известия ЦК КПСС, 1990, № 9, С. 184–192 [Information of the CC of the CPSU, 1989, № 4, pp. 184–192].
5. Трудные вопросы истории, М., 1991, С. 67 [Difficult Problems of History, Moscow, 1991, p. 67].
6. Десятый Съезд РКП (б). Стенографический отчет, М., 1963, С. 571 [Tenth Congress of the RCP(b), Moscow, 1963, p. 571].
7. Огонёк, 1987, № 50, С. 5 [Ogonyok, 1987, № 50, p. 5].
8. Вопросы истории КПСС, 1990, № 5, С. 53 [Questions of History of the CPSU, 1990, № 5, p. 53].
9. Вопросы истории КПСС, 1990, № 1, С. 141 [Questions of History of the CPSU, 1990, № 1, p. 141].
10. Известия ЦК РКП(б), 1924, № 1, С. 64–65 [Information of the CC RCP(b), 1924, № 1, pp. 64–65].
11. Известия ЦК КПСС, 1991, № 1, С. 195 [Information of the CC of the CPSU, 1991, № 1, “Plenum of the CC CPSU,” July 1953, p. 195].
12. Бажанов, Борис, Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина, С. 87 [Boris Bazhanov, Memoirs of Stalin’s Former Secretary, p. 87].
13. Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. I, С. 80–81 [Communist Opposition in the USSR, Volume 1, pp. 80–81].
14. Троцкий, Л. Д., Дневники и письма, Эрмитаж (США), 1986, С. 111 [Cf. Trotsky’s Diary in Exile. 1935, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 102].
15. Троцкий, Л. Д., Моя жизнь, С. 464 [Cf. Trotsky, My Life, p. 488].



Presidium Members of Central Control Commission, responsible for conducting the purge of 1924.
Left to right: Emelyan Yaroslavsky, Matvei Shkiryatov, Valerian Kuibyshev



Aron Solts, Member of Presidium of CCC



1924 Purge Files

28. When Stalin's Fate Was Being Decided

Having concentrated all the levers of administration in their own hands, the "Seven" began to prepare for the Thirteenth Party Congress, which opened in May 1924. An important stage in their preparation became the "verification and purge" of the non-production party cells (that is, the military, academic, and administrative cells), where the number of communists sympathetic to the Opposition was particularly high. The campaign, carried out according to the instructions issued by the Politburo on 20 March 1924 for the review of party members who were not "workers from the bench," "reviewed" 230,000 Communists, or 23 percent of the total number of members and candidate-members of the party. A total of 5,763 people were "purged" from the party, or 2.7 percent of those who were "reviewed."

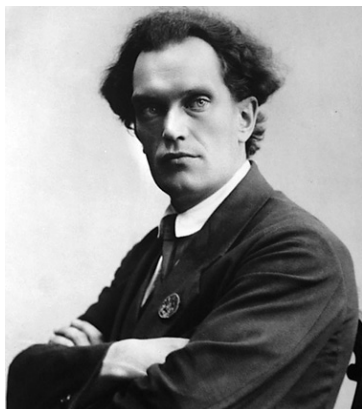
In his speech at the Thirteenth Party Congress, Preobrazhensky pointed out that the purge was conducted with particular severity in those organizations which had passed resolutions favoring the Opposition. The purge had therefore turned into a means of driving oppositionists from the party. Moreover, the purge commission accused the expelled members not of oppositionist activity, but of every kind of moral defect. Preobrazhensky explained:

At the present time, we see that the commissions which are conducting this purge are obliged by a decree of the CCC to purge comrades not for opposition ... They are compelled to formally expel comrades from the party

not for what they are truly guilty of ... As a result of the mistakes made by the purge commissions, people whom we have no reason to lose are leaving the party and being blacklisted.¹

Delegates to the Thirteenth Congress were selected by means of methods approved by the apparatus. Among the delegates with deciding votes there was not a single supporter of the Opposition. Even Trotsky, Radek, Rakovsky, and Piatakov, as members of the CC, were admitted to the congress merely with a consultative vote.

The carefully chosen delegates to the congress thus unanimously stigmatized the Opposition and demanded — beginning with the CC's political report given by Zinoviev — that the Opposition renounce its views. The speeches of two Opposition leaders, Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, who indicated that such a demand was being made in the party for the first time, merely evoked a new wave of aggressive attacks.



Valerian Kuibyshev
(1888–1935)

The speech by the Central Control Commission's Chairman, Kuibyshev, was particularly cynical; in essence Kuibyshev rejected the Leninist conception of the CCC as an independent organ with rights equal to those of the Central Committee, and as a body called upon to safeguard the party from a split. Recalling the declarations by Oppositionists during the discussion that the CCC had turned into a mere subsidiary organ of the Central Committee, Kuibyshev said:

They tried to obtain from us some kind of independent line, some kind of neutrality, which would give us the possibility of approaching the unfolding battle "from the sidelines," and to evaluate all the combatants dispassionately and calmly, praising or castigating each according to his merits. They flattered

us and said: "You are an organ, elected by the congress, you are equal to the Central Committee, you answer only to the congress for your policy, and therefore you must have your own individual line, you must be as independent as possible of the Central Committee." ... They tried to convince us that we must be impartial, that we must be an authority standing above the unfolding struggle. This seductive position ... did not seduce the Central Control Commission ... We immediately sensed (sic! – V. R.) that the CC's position in this struggle was 100 percent correct. ... And without any reservation or hesitation we went along with the CC.²

The only speech at the congress in support of Trotsky was made by Souvarine, a delegate with a consultative vote and member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, who also served on the Executive Committee of the Comintern. In translating this speech, Lunacharsky said:

Comrade Souvarine reports that a significant part of the French Communist Party was extremely troubled by the sharp tone which the Russian dispute has assumed. It seems to them that the affair does not come down to principled arguments, but to attacks of various shades which have particularly intensified around the name of comrade Trotsky. Comrade Souvarine and others feel that Trotsky's name bears an international significance, and they feel that it is incorrect to degrade the merits of this great revolutionary figure in such a manner. Therefore a resolution was passed, by a vote of 22 to 2, instructing the French delegation to the Comintern, while by no means supporting the viewpoint of the Opposition, to try to intervene in this struggle with a proposal of reconciliation to end the dispute. Comrade Souvarine personally believed — and others agreed with him — that the charge of Menshevism levelled against Trotsky is completely groundless, and that comrade Trotsky's significance for the world proletariat is so great, that to a significant degree his name is synonymous with the revolution; therefore, it is necessary to put an end to these accusations, since, while they are directed against comrade Trotsky, as comrade Souvarine has clearly seen, they in fact deliver a serious blow to the entire Russian Communist Party, and to the Comintern.

Describing his own personal position, Souvarine stated that, in his opinion, the discussion "was circulating a multitude of lies and slander against Trotsky." Therefore, he considered it necessary to speak sharply and energetically in Trotsky's defense against this slanderous campaign.

Souvarine emphasized that he foresaw the victory the CC would secure at the Thirteenth Congress and therefore took into account how risky his position was; nevertheless, he had nothing to regret in his position and considered it his duty to uphold it at the congress. After his speech was translated, shouts of “Shame!” were directed toward Souvarine from the audience.³

Krupskaya attempted to mitigate the sharpness of the attacks against the Opposition by reminding the congress that its responsibility was “even greater in the absence of Vladimir Ilyich.” She appealed to the delegates to discuss the new tasks standing before the party and not merely to repeat the previous discussion or demand that the Opposition unconditionally renounce its views, since such a demand was “psychologically impossible” and would merely “introduce additional tension into the relations between the former opposition and the core of the party.”⁴

The congress, however, did not heed Krupskaya’s appeal; instead, in their lengthy speeches, the members of the “Seven” — in particular Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin — again and again returned to criticism of the Opposition. Their persistence was dictated by the need at the congress to fulfill an unforeseen task: to disavow in the eyes of the delegates the significance of Lenin’s “Testament” and, above all, the advice contained within it for the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary.



Boris Souvarine
(1895–1984)

For three and a half months after Lenin's death, negotiations proceeded between the Politburo and Krupskaya regarding the presentation of the "Testament" at the congress. All the members of the Politburo (except Trotsky) categorically argued against this. Only on 18 May, five days before the opening of the congress, Krupskaya submitted the "Letter to the Congress" to members of the commission in charge of gathering Lenin's papers, which consisted of the same Triumvirate. The protocol verifying the transferal of this letter included Krupskaya's words about Lenin expressing his firm desire that, after his death, it would be brought to the attention of the next party congress.⁵

The first official presentation of the "Testament" occurred on 21 May 1924, one day before the opening of the congress. The document was read aloud at a session of the Council of Elders, consisting of CC members and the leaders of local party organizations. It was apparently at this meeting that the Oppositionists within the CC, including Trotsky, heard the full text of the "Letter to the Congress" for the first time.

Boris Bazhanov, who as secretary recorded the minutes of the meeting, described the course of events in the following manner. At the table of the presiding chair sat Kamenev and Zinoviev. Members of the CC sat on chairs facing the speaker's platform. Trotsky sat alongside Piatakov and Radek. Stalin took a seat next to the platform with his face to it; therefore, the CC members did not see his face, although Bazhanov, who was on the platform, could see it well. Kamenev opened the session and read Lenin's letter. All became quiet. Stalin's face became gloomy and tense. At that moment, as Trotsky later recalled:

Radek ... turned to me and said, "Now they won't dare to oppose you."

Radek had in mind two passages in the letter: one which characterized Trotsky as "the ablest man in the present CC," and another which demanded the replacement of Stalin in light of his rudeness, his insufficient loyalty, and his inclination to abuse his power. I answered Radek: "On the contrary, now they will have to go all the way, and as quickly as possible."⁶

Trotsky's prognosis was soon vindicated. In accordance with a pre-arranged scenario, Zinoviev immediately took the floor. Bazhanov relates the content of his speech as follows:

Comrades, you all know that the will of the deceased Ilyich, every word of Ilyich, is law for us ... But there is one point about which — we are happy to state — the fears of Ilyich have not been justified. We have all witnessed our common work over recent months, and, like me, you have been able to see with satisfaction that what Ilyich feared has not occurred. I'm speaking of our General Secretary and of the dangers of a split in the CC.⁷

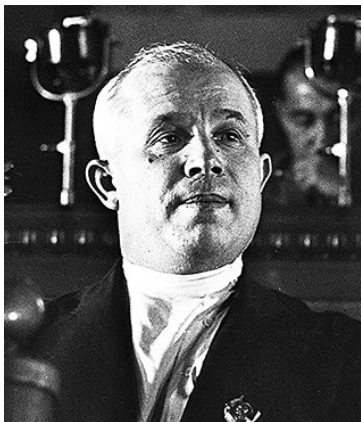
The CC members could not fail to realize, of course, that the second part of Zinoviev's "happy" report was nothing less than hypocritical, for the split in the CC had already occurred. The question regarding the General Secretary was more complex. Even during the pre-October period, many old Bolsheviks who had come into direct contact with Stalin knew of his negative traits. In the letters of Sverdlov to his wife from exile, where he lived together with Stalin, there are more than a few hostile references to Stalin. "You don't know, my dear," Sverdlov wrote on 16 November 1914, "what vile conditions I lived under in Kureika. The personal relations of the comrade with whom I was living there were such that we neither spoke to nor saw one another."⁸

Here is one more fact. In March 1917, following a discussion of a proposal to increase its size, the CC Bureau of the party passed the following resolution:

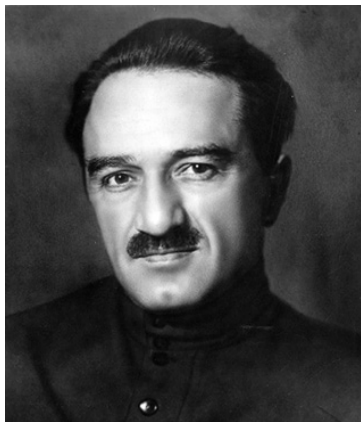
With regard to Stalin, it has been reported that he was an agent of the CC in 1912, and therefore would be a desirable member of the CC Bureau, but in view of several of his personal traits, the CC Bureau has decided to invite Stalin with a consultative voice.⁹

In the history of the party, such an instance of rejecting a candidate to an elected position because of "personal traits" appears to have been unique.

By 1924, however, Sverdlov and many other party leaders from the period of the underground and the February revolution either had died, or no longer occupied positions in the CC. Lenin's criticism of Stalin therefore surprised many CC members, especially the younger members, several of whom were indebted to Stalin for their promotions. As Khrushchev justifiably wrote in his memoirs, during the period of struggle against the Opposition, Stalin exhibited flexibility in relations



Nikita Khrushchev
(1894–1971)



Anastas Mikoyan
(1895–1978)

with his allies:

He played upon people's feelings and desired to demonstrate ... if not respect, then at least tolerance for the opinions of other members of the collective in which he worked. This was deception and calculation; he wanted to go fishing, so to speak, in order to hook those who sincerely wished to understand him.¹⁰

Mikoyan essentially wrote about the same thing, when he recalled :

I knew “two Stalins.” One whom I esteemed and respected highly, like an older comrade, for approximately the first ten years, and a completely different one in the following period. During the 1920s, I never would have believed that he was capable of criminal acts, and of what magnitude! ... I was able to appreciate fully the dictatorial potential and the acts of Stalin himself only when it had already become impossible to fight against him. I think that Ordzhonikidze and Kirov, with whom I was very close and whose moods I knew well, were also deceived by the “first” of the two Stalins.¹¹

In addition, one must not forget that the majority of CC members by May 1924 were already bound by factional discipline, which obliged them to accept unconditionally all decisions coming from the “Seven.” Therefore, the proposal, made first by Zinoviev and then reiterated by Kamenev, to re-elect Stalin General Secretary met no objections. All

remained silent. “Trotsky also remained silent, but his strong facial expression revealed his extreme contempt for this entire comedy. ... Stalin, as before, looked out the window with clenched jaws and a tense face: his fate was being decided.”¹²

As Trotsky recalled, it was at this meeting that Stalin first proposed to resign his post. “So I’m indeed rude ... Ilyich proposes that you find someone who is distinguished from me only by his great politeness. Well, go ahead, try to find such a person.” “No matter,” the voice of one of Stalin’s friends responded from his seat (that is, the voice of A. P. Smirnov, who realized the necessity of following Lenin’s advice only in 1932, and for that he was expelled from the CC at the beginning of 1933. – V. R.). “You do not frighten us with your rudeness — our entire party is rude and proletarian.” As Trotsky remarked, “indirectly here, Lenin was being assigned a salon understanding of politeness. Neither Stalin nor his friends mentioned the charge of insufficient loyalty.”¹³

Kamenev proposed to resolve the question by means of a vote. People voted by simply raising their hands. Bazhanov walked along the rows and counted votes, but reported to Kamenev only the final result. The majority voted to retain Stalin at the post of General Secretary, while only a small group around Trotsky voted against. There were also several abstentions (Bazhanov later regretted that, while busy counting hands, he failed to notice who in particular abstained).

Continuing their game, the leaders of the ruling faction, who by that time were already confidently manipulating the bureaucratic apparatus, introduced through one of their stooges a proposal that had been agreed upon beforehand by the leaders of local organizations: that the document should be read aloud at closed sessions of individual delegations; that no one would be permitted to take notes during its reading; and that references to the “Testament” at plenary sessions of the congress would be forbidden. Trotsky recalled :

With her gentle persistence Krupskaya tried to prove that this was a direct violation of the will of Lenin, to whom it was impossible to deny the right to deliver his final advice to the rest of the party. But the members of the Council

of Elders, who were bound by factional discipline, remained inflexible: the troika's proposal thus passed by an overwhelming majority.¹⁴

As a result, the published records of the congress contain not a single reference to the existence of the "Letter to the Congress." Party members were left only with the option of discussing the document with each other privately and in the strictest confidentiality.

As Bazhanov recalled, "the resolution of the plenum was edited with a deliberate lack of clarity, thereby allowing the leaders of the delegations simply to describe to their delegates the essence of Lenin's letter and the decisions of the Plenum, without letting them become familiar with Lenin's text as they should."¹⁵ At a time when such an important document demanded thorough consideration and an exchange of opinions, its contents were made known to the delegations only by hearsay, and even then, evidently, in a truncated form. Moreover, according to Trotsky,

the reading of the document among regional delegations, to which "outsiders" were not admitted, was transformed into a direct struggle against me. During readings the leaders of the various delegations omitted some words, emphasized others, and added that the letter had been written by a man who was seriously ill and under the influence of intrigues and machinations. The apparatus was already in complete control. The simple fact that the troika would dare to trample on the will of Lenin by refusing to present the letter at the congress is enough to characterize the composition of the congress and its atmosphere.¹⁶

At closed sessions of the delegations after the reading of the "Letter to the Congress," Zinoviev and Kamenev usually added commentaries, from which it followed that the situation in the party had seriously changed from the very moment when Lenin had written his letter. Now it was no longer the rudeness and insufficient loyalty of Stalin that posed the main danger to the party, but the activity of Trotsky and his supporters, who stood to benefit from Stalin's removal from the post of General Secretary. In addition, Zinoviev and Kamenev assured the delegates that Stalin promised to take into account Lenin's criticism of his shortcomings. Stalin immediately promised that he would do so.

On the whole, the delegates to the congress were subjected to crude pressure: they were presented with a pre-accepted resolution, according to which Lenin's letter could only be read aloud, but not discussed.¹⁷

As a result of maneuvers by the ruling faction, Lenin's only personal proposal to the party congress was rejected. Moreover, the Thirteenth Congress witnessed the implementation of a non-statutory procedure of deciding the question of the General Secretary. From the beginning, the retention of Stalin at this post was approved by a formal resolution of the congress delegations, and then the plenum of the CC "formulated" the decision. As a result of such a procedure, Stalin supposedly had received a mandate as General Secretary directly from the congress, to which he would often allude in the future. Thus, instead of Stalin's power being limited, as Lenin had insisted, his power was increased.

Following the presentation of the "Testament," the triumvirate could not bring itself to pose the question of removing Trotsky from the Politburo and other positions of leadership, although it had already made such threats during the 1923 discussion. However, when re-elected to the Politburo, Trotsky now found himself in even greater isolation than before. Of his supporters, the Twelfth Congress left only Piatakov and Rakovsky in the Central Committee. Along with Stalin, the CC Plenum held after the congress elected Molotov (for the fourth time), Andreev, Kaganovich, and Zelensky (all three for the first time) to the CC Secretariat. In the fall of 1924, Stalin transferred Zelensky, who also worked as secretary of the Moscow Committee, and whom Stalin had good grounds to suspect of supporting Zinoviev and Kamenev, to the post of Secretary of the Central Asian Bureau of the CC. He thus received a Secretariat that consisted solely of his own unconditional followers.

The procedure accepted at the congress for publicizing the "Testament" led to the following situation: because of focusing on the question of Stalin, other advice and proposals contained in this document were pushed into the background. Lenin's plan for political reform was not even discussed at the Thirteenth Congress, nor at any subsequent party forums. The essential disregard of Lenin's most important ideas for political reform became one of the main reasons that

his prognosis of a possible split in the ranks of the party and the CC was realized in such forms and on such a scale that not even Lenin's extraordinary insight could have foreseen.

Historical responsibility for the squandered final opportunity to interrupt the flow of events in favor of a rebirth of party democracy falls primarily on Zinoviev and Kamenev. In all of their actions, right up to their final break with Stalin, one is struck not only by their lack of principles, by virtue of which they were close to Stalin, but also their extreme political short-sightedness, which facilitated Stalin's relatively easy victory over them during the next stages of inner-party struggle. One and a half years later, after Stalin had effectively removed them from power, Zinoviev reminded the General Secretary that it was precisely he and Kamenev who had saved him from political downfall. He then asked with bitterness: "Does comrade Stalin know what gratitude is?" Stalin answered with complete sincerity, indicating how naïve it was to expect such a feeling from him: "But of course I know, I know very well — it's an illness that afflicts dogs."¹⁸ Having barely recovered from the alarm generated by the attention paid to the "Testament," Stalin carried out his first foray against his allies in the troika only two weeks after the conclusion of the Thirteenth Congress. In a speech at a local meeting on the results of the Thirteenth Congress, Stalin casually accused Kamenev and Zinoviev of "their usual carelessness with regard to theoretical questions and precise theoretical definitions." As an example, he declared that he had "read a report in the newspaper by one of our comrades (Kamenev, it seems) on the Thirteenth Congress, where it is stated in black and white that the next slogan of our party is supposedly the transformation of "*NEPman* Russia" into Socialist Russia. What is even worse, this strange slogan is attributed to none other than Lenin himself."¹⁹

Stalin was taking advantage of an error by the stenographer, who recorded "NEPman Russia" instead of "NEP Russia." A few days later, *Pravda* reported on the reason for this "distortion" of Lenin's formula. Stalin, of course, understood that what was involved in this case was merely an editorial oversight. Nevertheless, he declared that Kamenev

had “fired off” this strange slogan, which allegedly could generate “a mass of confusion” in the party and create the impression that Nepmen were leading Russia.

In the same report, Stalin referred to the “thesis on the dictatorship of the party,” advanced by Zinoviev at the Twelfth Congress and confirmed by a congress resolution, as “an absurdity” which “could cause confusion and misunderstanding in the party.”²⁰ This time a more principled question was at issue. However, Stalin himself had not questioned this thesis earlier and had voted for it at the Twelfth Congress. Now, in order to disavow it, he recalled Lenin’s idea regarding the necessity of “*drawing a distinction* between party and state organs,” which he and the other triumvirs had essentially rejected in the recent polemic with Trotsky.

Without any prior discussion in the Politburo, Stalin published part of his report in *Pravda* on 20 June. The published fragment seriously wounded the ambitions of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who considered themselves the leading theoreticians in the party. Because it was understood at the time to avoid even an indirect polemic between members of the “Seven,” Zinoviev and Kamenev interpreted Stalin’s deed as a decisive pronouncement against the “core,” which threatened to break it up.

For this reason, Zinoviev and Kamenev called a meeting of fifteen to seventeen “leading comrades,” where Stalin openly declared that he intended to use his speech to “broaden the ‘core,’ for it had become too narrow.”²¹ The meeting declared Stalin’s speech to be mistaken. In response, Stalin in turn announced his resignation, which once again was not accepted. Thus, the attempt by Zinoviev and Kamenev to mobilize a “parallel CC” against Stalin ended in failure.

Immediately following the Thirteenth Congress, Stalin began the gradual preparation of a new split within the Politburo and the creation of a new high-level bloc — this time with the “young” members of the Politburo who had entered its ranks between 1922 and 1924: Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky. For the time being, however, Stalin withheld the formation of the new bloc against Zinoviev and Kamenev, since he still

needed the latter for the upcoming struggle against their common enemies at the time: Trotsky and his co-thinkers.

1. *Тринадцатый Съезд КПК (б). Стенографический отчет*, М., 1963, С. 192–193 [*Thirteenth Congress of the RCP(b)*, Moscow, 1963, pp. 192–193].
2. Там же, С. 263–264 [*Ibid.*, pp. 263–264].
3. Там же, С. 354–355 [*Ibid.*, pp. 354–355].
4. Там же, С. 225 [*Ibid.*, p. 225].
5. Ленин, В. И., *Полное собрание сочинений*, Т. 45, С. 594 [Lenin, PSS, Volume 45, p. 594].
6. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 70 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 70].
7. Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 106 [Boris Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, p. 106].
8. Сverdlov, Я. М., *Избранные произведения*, М., 1957, Т. 1, С. 298. См. также С. 268, 276, 277 [Ya. M. Sverdlov, *Selected Works*, М., 1957, Volume 1, p. 298. See also pp. 268, 276, 277].
9. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1962, №3, С. 143 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1962, № 3, p. 143].
10. *Вопросы истории*, 1990, № 2, С. 88 [*Questions of History*, 1990, № 2, p. 88].
11. *Огонёк*, 1987, № 50, С. 5–6 [*Ogonyok*, 1987, № 50, pp. 5–6].
12. Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 106–107 [Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, pp. 106–107].
13. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 272 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 272].
14. Там же, С. 269 [*Ibid.*, p. 269].
15. Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 107 [Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, p. 107].
16. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Портреты революционеров*, С. 272 [Trotsky, *Portraits of Revolutionaries*, p. 272].
17. There do exist, however, reports of intense discussions of the “Testament” at the meetings of several delegations. See *Pravda*, 26 May 1964.
18. Бажанов, Борис, *Воспоминания бывшего секретаря Сталина*, С. 107 [Bazhanov, *Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, p. 107].
19. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 257 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 6, pp. 269–270].
20. Там же, С. 258 [*Ibid.*, p. 271].
21. *Четырнадцатый съезд ВКП(б)*, Стенографический отчет, М., 1926, С. 454–455 [*Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1926, pp. 454–455].

Дружеские шаржи.



КАРЛ РАДЕК.

Рис. Дени.

Се — великий пра-правнук африканских обезьян,
 «Красный Аппалон» двадцатого века,
 Товарищ Радек, сосущий кальян
 И диктующий статьи — («Москва и Мекка»).

Демьян Бедный.

*Karl Radek as portrayed by Deni in 1923.
 The four lines below the sketch are by Demyan Bedny.*

29. The Tactic of a United Front

The struggle continued to sharpen, embracing the broadest range of theoretical and practical questions. In 1924, Boris Souvarine wrote that a conflict could be seen in the USSR “between the vital, critical revolutionary spirit, continually renewed and enriched” by Trotsky and his ideological allies, and the “pseudo-revolutionary, conservative spirit” that dominates at official party meetings. Souvarine saw a fundamental contradiction in party life:

The great majority of the working class is Trotskyist, which is apparent in the enormous demonstrations that occur wherever Trotsky speaks. But at the congress, all this is expressed in the notorious one hundred percent vote in favor of the Central Committee.

Even after the congress,

Trotsky's popularity continued to grow, as his lengthy speeches before diverse audiences sent his listeners into raptures. It was often said that only Trotsky offers new ideas, that only he has studied an issue seriously, etc. This attitude toward him was quite striking against the background of indifference, if not contempt, which greeted the banalities and trivialities that filled the pages of *Pravda*.¹

Trotsky actively continued his theoretical work, summarizing the new patterns of world development. In 1924 he released the books *West and East* and *On the Road To the European Revolution*. Several ideas from these works were subjected to criticism by members of the “leading collective.” In September 1924, for example, Stalin indirectly spoke out against Trotsky's ideas that America had achieved hegemony in the

capitalist world after the world war, and that peace between the capitalist nations would be ensured for a relatively long period.²

In the mid-1920s, a sharp ideological struggle developed around the issue of a unified front of the working class, that is, a union of the Communists with Social-Democracy in the capitalist countries. With the active participation of Lenin, the Comintern had developed a policy in 1921–1922 for “a united front of all workers and a coalition of all working-class parties in the economic and political spheres for the purpose of a struggle against bourgeois power and for its final overthrow.”³

The triumvirate began to dismantle this policy at the end of 1923. Zinoviev asserted:

We must understand once and for all, that for the Comintern the tactic of a united front was and still remains only a strategic maneuver in the struggle against the counter-revolutionary leaders of social-democracy, a method of agitation among workers who put their trust in social-democracy. And only that. We must forever part ways with the idea that the tactic of a united front is something more.⁴

Several members of the communist movement pointed out the incorrectness and left-sectarian character of such a directive. A letter from the leadership of the Polish Communist Party in December 1923, for example, indicated the incorrectness of any formulations that might be construed as a rejection of the tactic of a united front.⁵ In response to this letter, at a session of the Presidium of the Comintern’s Executive Committee in January 1924, Zinoviev declared that Social-Democracy was “a wing of fascism” and the main enemy of communists. Stalin, like Zinoviev, affirmed that in Germany,

a shifting of forces has recently occurred; a shifting of the petty-bourgeois social-democratic forces to the side of counter-revolution, into the camp of fascism. Our conclusion: not a coalition with Social-Democracy, but a struggle to the death against it, as the buttress of the present fascist power.⁶

These positions, which found expression in the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, were profoundly incorrect: the leaders of Social-Democracy, along with the greater part of the working



Grigory Zinoviev
(1883–1936)



Karl Radek
(1885–1939)

class behind them, were sharply opposed to fascism. A “struggle to the death” would entail an inevitable weakening of both the Social-Democrats and the Communists, and thus of the workers’ movement as a whole. This crude mistake became one of the reasons for the defeat of the German proletariat in 1923. Zinoviev and Kamenev, however, drew a different conclusion: they blamed the defeat primarily on German Social-Democracy, which supposedly had gone over to the side of fascism, and also on part of the leadership of the German Communist Party, which had striven for a union with the Social-Democrats. This conclusion was contained in Zinoviev’s report on the international situation at the January Plenum of the CC in 1924. At this meeting, however, Zinoviev’s report was disputed by Radek, who had recently returned from Germany. During the discussion at the plenum, Stalin laid special blame on Radek for “considering the main enemy in Germany to be fascism and for proposing a necessary coalition with Social-Democrats.”⁷

However, even after this, Radek continued to remain an opponent of Zinoviev and Stalin on this issue. At the Thirteenth Party Conference, he resolutely opposed speeches “against the tactic of a left front as it had

been initiated under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich, despite the resistance of comrade Zinoviev in 1921.” Radek also protested against Zinoviev and Stalin for denouncing as “right-wing” those German Communists who had called for joint action with the Social-Democrats. It was this section of the German Communist Party, Radek stated,

that was the basic group of the party which matured during the struggles against Kautsky after 1911; which carried on its shoulders all the weight of the illegal struggle of the “Union of Spartacists” against the war; which had founded the German Communist Party in 1918; and which had led the civil war in 1919–20. With this group, led by the close associates of Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht — comrades Brandler, Pieck, Thalheimer, Walcher, and Clara Zetkin — I have been and remain now in basic solidarity.⁸

Speaking at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in June–July 1924, Radek declared that the tactic of a united front must consist in this:

We honestly and openly are prepared to travel part of the way with the working-class parties who wish to struggle — we will proceed along that part of the journey where they will be able to travel with us ... Only in this way ... can we count on success in implementing the tactic of a united front.⁹

This position found support from a number of the leaders of foreign Communist Parties. V. Kolarov, the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, declared:

The primary source of mistakes committed by our party lies in the failure to utilize the tactic of the united front to the fullest extent. Among us the united front is implemented only from below. We ignored the peasant organizations, as well as the Bulgarian Mensheviks and Social-Democrats. ... What is the task at the present moment? The tactic of a united front from above and from below, in all directions and in all of its variations.¹⁰



Clara Zetkin
(1857–1933)



August Thalheimer
(1884–1948)



Heinrich Brandler
(1881–1967)

Criticism of left-sectarian tendencies was also contained in the speech by Clara Zetkin. All the same, victory at the congress belonged to the position held by Zinoviev, who once again repudiated the tactic of a united workers' front. "We understood this tactic to be a strategic maneuver," Zinoviev explained, "but other comrades began to interpret it as the policy of a union with Social-Democracy, as a coalition of 'all workers' parties.'"¹¹ The resolution of the congress included a sectarian directive:

The tactic of a united front is merely a method of agitation and revolutionary mobilization of the masses for an entire period. Any attempts to interpret this tactic as a political coalition with counter-revolutionary Social-Democracy are an expression of opportunism, which the Communist International rejects.¹²

The resolution of the congress on fascism emphasized that "amidst the ever-progressing collapse of bourgeois society, all the bourgeois parties and in particular Social Democracy are assuming a more or less fascist character and resorting to fascist methods of struggle against the proletariat. ... Fascism and Social-Democracy comprise two edges of the same blade used by the dictatorship of large-scale capital. Therefore Social-Democracy can never be a reliable ally in the proletariat's struggle against fascism."¹³

After the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, Stalin and Zinoviev continued to defend the mistaken policy of effectively liquidating the

tactic of a united front and thereby splitting the workers' movement. They therefore oriented the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries toward delivering their main blow against Social-Democracy in general and against its left-wing in particular. In his article "On the International Situation" of September 1924, Stalin wrote:

Social-Democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism. There is no basis to assume that the militant organization of the bourgeoisie (i.e., fascism – V. R.) can achieve decisive successes in battles or in governing the country without the active support of Social-Democracy. ... These two organizations do not negate, but supplement one another. They are not antipodes, but twins. Fascism is the informal political bloc of these two basic organizations, which arose amidst the conditions of the post-war crisis of imperialism and is aimed at fighting against the proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie cannot remain in power without such a bloc.¹⁴

In an interview with the German Communist Herzog "On the Perspectives of the German Communist Party and on Bolshevization," published on 9 February 1925 in *Pravda*, Stalin asserted that for victory in the German revolution "Social-Democracy must be exposed and routed, it must be reduced to an insignificant minority in the working class."¹⁵

Several leading figures in the Comintern disputed the erroneous formula about "twins." At a meeting of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern on 7 January 1925, the ECCI's secretary Humbert-Droz declared on behalf of the commission of the ECCI:

By categorizing as fascism everything not associated with the Communist Party, we run the risk of overlooking the formation of a real fascist movement.

Following the speech of Zinoviev, however, who demanded that the Communists' primary blow be directed against "social-fascism," the Presidium sent a letter to the Politburo of the French Communist Party calling for it to study "the process by which socialism turns fascist ..."¹⁶

At the Expanded Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in March–April 1925, a new step was taken toward confirming the idea of "social-fascism" as the main opponent of Communists. Together with Brandler and Thalheimer, two prominent

representatives of the German Communist Party, Radek presented a declaration expressing the need for “a coalition with left social-democratic elements.” A resolution of the congress condemned this declaration as “a tactical maneuver borrowed from the arsenal of social-democratic leaders” and as an expression of the “Trotskyist variety of Menshevism.”¹⁷ Finally, the Plenum resolved not to permit Radek’s participation in work of the Comintern.

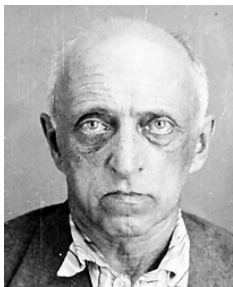
A resolution at the Fourteenth Conference of the RCP(b) in April 1925, on the tasks of the Comintern, condemned the support offered by Radek and his co-thinkers to a group of German Communists, who “had attempted to interpret the tactic of a united front as the tactic of a coalition with Social-Democrats.” Such an interpretation reflected “a definite divergence between the Leninist policy of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and Trotskyism.”¹⁸

Zinoviev and Stalin introduced another “innovation” in the questions of the international communist movement. Beginning in 1924, they advanced and forcefully implanted the line of the “Bolshevization” of all the other Communist Parties. This “Bolshevization” was understood as building the structure and organization of these parties in the image and likeness of the party regime that had developed in the Russian Communist Party: the strictest centralism; unconditional subordination of all Communists to the directives coming from the center — in this case, from the leadership of the Comintern, which was fully subordinated by that time to the Kremlin oligarchy. Thus, even before advancing the theory of the victory of socialism in one country, which led to the depiction of the Soviet Union as the ideal model for Communists of the entire world, the Communist Party of the USSR was declared to be such a model.

Guided by their factional and ambitious schemes, the Comintern leadership, with Zinoviev and Stalin at its head, had already initiated a struggle by the end of 1923 against those leaders, parties, and groups in the international communist movement who, in any form, pointed out the mistakes of the Comintern’s Executive Committee and expressed solidarity with the Russian Opposition. The series of blows delivered in

1923–1924 against the Polish Communist Party are noteworthy in this regard.

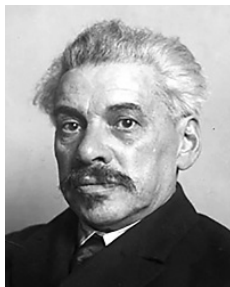
A letter from the CC of the Polish Communist Party to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and the CC of the RCP(b) provided the grounds for the assault. The letter placed responsibility on the ECCI for the defeat of the revolutionary movement in Germany. It criticized the sectarian formula of “a united front from below,” expressed concern over the methods employed in the inner-party struggle in the RCP(b), and proposed that the question of “the crisis in the RCP” be placed on the agenda of the next plenum of the ECCI. The letter also emphasized: “We do not allow for the possibility of comrade Trotsky being removed from the ranks of leaders in the RCP.”¹⁹ The Politburo’s response on 4 February 1924, signed by Stalin, asserted that the letter from the CC of the Polish Communist Party, “objectively might become support for that small opportunist faction in the RCP, whose politics has been rejected by an enormous majority in our party.”²⁰ At the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, Stalin, who headed the work of the Polish commission, called the CC of the Communist Party of Poland “the Polish branch of the opportunistic opposition in the RCP(b).”²¹



Walecki-Horwitz
(1877–1937)



Kostrzewa-Koszutska
(1876–1939)



Warski-Warszawski
(1868–1937)

The character of the pressure that was applied to the Polish Communists can be seen in the words of a member of the CC of the Communist Party of Poland, Wera Kostrzewa. In a speech at a session of

the commission at the congress, she said: "... Comrade Zinoviev informed us long ago, 'We will break your bones if you try to speak out against us.'" ²² Meanwhile, a crude and unceremonious intervention into the internal affairs of the PCP was made at the congress. On Stalin's insistence, its delegation re-elected the bureau of its CC, although it was not authorized by its own party to do so. This action removed a group of the party's leaders and most prominent theoreticians, including Warski, Kostrzewa, Walecki, and Próchniak. Not limiting himself to this, Stalin then edited a letter from the ECCI to the PCP which declared:

The Polish Communist Party, in spite of its revolutionary traditions, has become a buttress of the right opportunist wing of communism. Moreover, the group composed of Warski, Kostrzewa, and Walecki has spread its anti-Bolshevik tendencies to the soil of the USSR and attempted to deliver a blow behind the front lines of the Bolshevik CC at the difficult moment of Lenin's departure and the opportunistic attempts of the Russian Opposition to shake the foundations of the Russian Communist Party. The foreign group of PCP leaders then cast the influence of its own party onto the scales of the Russian opposition against the RCP, and that means, against Soviet power.

The charges of "anti-Bolshevism," "anti-Sovietism," and "opportunism" had been inserted into the text of the letter personally by Stalin. ²³

The organized reprisals against the leadership of the Polish Communist Party in 1924 foreordained the subsequent tragedy of that party: its dissolution in 1938 and the extermination in Stalin's prisons of hundreds of its best members.

By exercising factional maneuvers against dissenting members in the international communist movement, the leadership of the ECCI left unresolved the actual task of Bolshevizing the foreign Communist Parties — of assimilating the lessons from the struggle for the victory of the October Revolution. Meanwhile, the selection by these parties of the correct strategy and tactics required a general understanding of the experience of the October Revolution (and of the defeats of the revolutions in 1918–1923 in Europe) on a level comparable to Marx's understanding of the experience of the Paris Commune shown in his *Civil War in France*. It was this task that Trotsky set for himself in his

work, “The Lessons of October,” which opened a new stage in the inner-party struggle.

- [1.](#) Эхо, 1989, № 11, С. 163–164 [*Echo*, 1989, № 11, pp. 163–164].
- [2.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 6, С. 289 [Stalin, Works, Volume 6, p. 302].
- [3.](#) В. И. Ленин и Коммунистический Интернационал, М., 1970, С. 466 [*V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, Moscow, 1970, p. 466].
- [4.](#) Политическое образование, 1989, № 1, С. 79 [*Political Education*, 1989, № 1, p. 79].
- [5.](#) Коммунистический Интернационал. Краткий очерк, М., 1969, С. 214 [*The Communist International. A Brief Outline*, Moscow, 1969, p. 214].
- [6.](#) Вопросы истории КПСС, 1987, № 10, С. 123 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1987, № 10, p. 123].
- [7.](#) Октябрь, 1988, № 11, С. 65 [*October*, 1988, № 11, p. 65].
- [8.](#) Тринадцатая конференция Российской Коммунистической партии (большевиков). Бюллетень, С. 179 [*Thirteenth Conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*. Bulletin, p. 179].
- [9.](#) Пятый Всемирный Конгресс Коммунистического Интернационала, М., 1925, Ч. I, С. 153–155 [*Fifth World Congress of the Communist International*, Moscow, 1925, Part 1, pp. 153–155].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 277–278 [*Ibid.*, pp. 277–278].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 61, 68 [*Ibid.*, pp. 61, 68].
- [12.](#) Коммунистический Интернационал в документах, М., 1933, С. 407 [*The Communist International in Documents*, Moscow, 1933, p. 407].
- [13.](#) Там же, С. 448 [*Ibid.*, p. 448].
- [14.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 6, С. 282 [Cf. Stalin, Works, Volume 6, p. 294].
- [15.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 7, С. 36 [Stalin, Works, Volume 7, p. 36].
- [16.](#) Вопросы истории, 1989, № 8, С. 9 [*Questions of History*, 1989, № 8, p. 9].
- [17.](#) Расширенный Пленум Исполнительного Комитета Коммунистического Интернационала (21 марта–6 апреля 1925). Стенографический отчет, М.-Л., 1925, С. 580–582 [*Expanded Plenum of the ECCI (21 March–6 April 1925)*, Transcript, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, pp. 580–582].
- [18.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 3, С. 393 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, p. 393].
- [19.](#) Сб. История и сталинизм, М., 1991, С. 136 [*History and Stalinism*, Moscow, 1991, p. 136].
- [20.](#) Там же, С. 137 [*Ibid.*, p. 137].
- [21.](#) Вопросы истории, 1989, № 8, С. 6 [*Questions of History*, 1989, № 8, p. 6].
- [22.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].

[23.](#) Там же, С. 7 [Ibid., p. 7].

30. “The Lessons of October”

In the fall of 1924, Trotsky released the third volume of his collected works. The latest volume included speeches and articles from 1917, to which Trotsky added a preface under the title, “The Lessons of October.” In this work, Trotsky set out to interpret the historical lessons of the October Revolution in light of the entire subsequent experience of the international revolutionary movement.

Trotsky’s analysis began with the idea that the European bourgeoisie was threatened by mortal danger at the end of the world war. The socialist revolution was victorious only in Russia, however, for in the remaining countries there were no parties capable of leading the masses to revolution and retaining power. In “The Lessons of October,” Trotsky developed the ideas of Lenin, who, in his report at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920, had sharply criticized conceptions that there was no way out of capitalism’s crisis. He had emphasized that, in order to transform this crisis into a victorious proletarian revolution, a subjective factor was needed in the form of Communist parties, capable of leading the masses behind them. The article “Lessons of October” was the development of ideas repeatedly expressed by Trotsky in articles and reports that analyzed the reasons for the defeat of the German revolution in the fall of 1923. In these works, published in *Pravda* and printed in separate editions, Trotsky emphasized that, in the fall of 1923, the German revolution was drawing nearer with each passing day. In its approach, the Comintern saw the fundamental factor of world development. All of the leaders of the Comintern shared this conclusion

in the fall of 1923. On 20 September, Stalin wrote to August Thalheimer, one of the leaders of the CC of the German Communist Party:

The victory of the revolution in Germany will be more significant for the proletariat in Europe and America than the victory of the Russian revolution six years ago. The victory of the German proletariat, undoubtedly, will shift the center of world revolution from Moscow to Berlin.¹

The realization of this perspective would have meant a substantial regrouping in the leadership of the Comintern and the “troika’s” loss of a dominant position within it. In addition, the transformation of an immediate revolutionary situation into an open movement by the German proletariat would have strengthened the position of Trotsky, who was insisting on an immediate insurrection and had drawn up a detailed plan for it. The leadership of the German Communist Party requested that Moscow send Trotsky to Germany to direct the insurrection. This proposal was rejected by the Politburo, which decided instead to send to Germany a “German commission” of lower-ranking Russian Communist Party members, who were instructed to “make decisions on the spot.”

As a result of contradictory instructions issued to the German Communist Party by the leadership of the Comintern, as well as the indecisiveness of the German CC on the question of an insurrection, the German revolution — whose victory communists in Russia and throughout the entire world anxiously awaited — suffered defeat. Its defeat became one of the main reasons for the subsequent weakening of the international communist movement and for the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

In his works of 1924, Trotsky pointed out that one could not imagine conditions that were riper and more advanced for the seizure of power by the proletariat than those which had developed in Germany in 1923. But the German Communist Party was unable to take advantage of those conditions. The defeat of the German revolution in 1923 was no less substantial than the defeat of the Russian revolution in 1905. The difference lay in the failure of the German Communists to take matters all the way to a clash of class forces. That is, the immediate reason for the

defeat lay in the incorrect and indecisive leadership of the party. History would hardly offer the German proletariat more favorable objective conditions for the seizure of power than those that existed at the time. In Germany there were all the material, political, and psychological prerequisites of revolution except one: a strong revolutionary party and a leader like the one the Russian Revolution had in October 1917 in the figure of Lenin.

In “The Lessons of October,” Trotsky characterized the German events as “a classical example of how it is possible to miss an utterly unique revolutionary situation of world-historic significance.” He wrote that “it is difficult to speak of an analysis of the events in Bulgaria and Germany when we haven’t yet given a politically and tactically reworked picture of the October Revolution.”² On this point, he recounted, briefly but distinctly, the history of the struggle within the Bolshevik Party between February and October of 1917: the conciliatory and “defensist” position taken by *Pravda*, with Kamenev and Stalin at its head, prior to Lenin’s arrival in Petrograd; the criticism by many old Bolsheviks of Lenin’s “April Theses”; the protest of Zinoviev and Kamenev against the insurrection; his own position on the question of when to initiate the insurrection, which was conditioned by the intention to place it under the aegis of “soviet legality,” i.e., to plan for it to coincide with the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets, etc. Here, Trotsky reiterated persistently that the exposure of differences that existed within the Bolshevik Party in 1917

cannot and should not in any way be perceived as directed against those comrades who supported incorrect policies. On the other hand, it would be inadmissible to erase from the history of the party its greatest chapter, simply because not all party members were in step with the proletarian revolution. The party can and should know its *entire* past in order to evaluate it correctly and assign to each event its proper place. The tradition of a revolutionary party is created not from omissions, but from critical clarity.³

Lacking arguments that they could oppose to Trotsky’s analysis, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Stalin embarked on the path of open falsification and slander, turning the party’s attention toward completely different

issues in order to create the myth of “Trotskyism” as the long-standing enemy of Bolshevism. The announcement of the release of the book *1917* appeared in *Pravda* on 14 October. Just ten days later Zinoviev and Kamenev proposed that the “Seven” pass a draft resolution of the CC plenum that they had composed, in which the “Lessons of October” was characterized as “a deliberate distortion of party history, intended to achieve by roundabout means the factional aims of comrade Trotsky that were rejected by the party after the winter discussion.”⁴ The issue of Trotsky’s article, however, was not raised at a session of the Politburo and was not included on the agenda of the October Plenum of the CC.

Instead, an unscrupulous campaign was undertaken in the press, referred to by its initiators as the “literary discussion with Trotskyism.” The signal for the campaign was given by an editorial in *Pravda* written by Bukharin entitled “How Not to Write the History of October (On the Release of Trotsky’s Book “1917”).”⁵ Shortly thereafter, *Pravda* published three extensive works, extremely similar not only in content, but also in name: Kamenev’s report, “Leninism or Trotskyism?,” which was read at a meeting of Moscow party activists, then repeated at a faction meeting of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council [VTsSPS], and then at a conference meeting of military officials; Stalin’s “Trotskyism or Leninism?” — a speech given at the plenum of the Communist faction of the VTsSPS; and Zinoviev’s article, “Bolshevism or Trotskyism?” These three works, together with articles by Sokolnikov, Kuusinen, and others, were included in the hastily printed collections *On the Lessons of October* and *For Leninism*, which were published in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. At the same time, anthologies appeared called *Lenin on Trotsky and Trotskyism (Articles from 1906–1916, edited by Lenin)*, which were reprints of polemical articles from before the revolution. Molotov produced a pamphlet *On the Lessons of Trotskyism*, in which he attacked Trotsky’s recollections of Lenin; prior to that time, no one in the party had viewed these memoirs as “seditious.” Zinoviev displayed particular zeal in the “struggle against Trotskyism”; he charged Trotsky with a deviation to the right, an over-estimation of American ultra-imperialism, an under-estimation of counter-revolutionary Social-Democracy, and so

forth.⁶ Following Zinoviev, the remaining leaders of the Leningrad party organization launched vicious attacks against Trotsky.

At the end of 1924, Pravda published dozens of resolutions from local party committees condemning “The Lessons of October.” A particularly aggressive resolution, issued by the Leningrad Gubernia Committee [“gubkom”] on the basis of Zinoviev’s report, proposed that the issue of Trotsky’s statement be examined at the very next plenum of the CC. The resolution demanded that “more decisive measures be taken to remove from the party those elements who have spoken out against the resolution of the Thirteenth Congress on the petty-bourgeois deviation and who openly continue to carry on active work against the decisions of the congress.”⁷ The resolution by the Moscow Committee following Kamenev’s report was limited to attacks on Trotsky alone, calling “The Lessons of October” “a crude distortion of the history of Bolshevism and the history of the October Revolution,” and “an attempt to replace Leninism with Trotskyism,” described as “nothing other than one of the forms of Menshevism.” The very fact of publishing “The Lessons of October” was declared “a violation by comrade Trotsky of the promises he made at the Thirteenth Congress,” and “the undermining of party unity.” “With his statement, comrade Trotsky has once again confronted the party with the danger of discussion.”⁸ Thus arose the interpretation of any inner-party discussion as a “danger” which threatened the unity of the party. In the “literary discussion,” as in the discussion of 1923, the content of Stalin’s statements did not differ in any essential way from the statements of the other representatives of the CC majority. Like other opponents of Trotsky in this one-sided discussion, Stalin depicted the October [1917] mistake of Zinoviev and Kamenev as an insignificant and accidental episode. While denying that “the figures of Kamenev and Zinoviev formed the right wing of our party in October,” he emphasized that “in spite of our differences, these comrades were old Bolsheviks, who stood on the common ground of Bolshevism.”⁹ In just over a year after this assessment, Stalin and his allies would begin to interpret the position of Kamenev and Zinoviev in October as “capitulatory” and “defeatist.”

The charges against them in this regard would become more sinister, culminating in the interpretation of their 1917 behavior in the *Short Course* as the actions of “despicable traitors.”

The “literary discussion” served Stalin well. His position in the discussion improved relative to Zinoviev and Kamenev, since they found it necessary to defend themselves, while Stalin defended them from the apparent position of an impartial arbiter in the dispute. In addition, given the October mistake of Zinoviev and Kamenev, the numerous mistakes of Stalin himself in 1917 remained, as it were, in the shadows. Taking advantage of the situation, Stalin put into circulation for the first time several falsified versions of pre-October history that later were broadly inflated by Stalinist propaganda.

Stalin declared that he wished to limit himself to the “exposure of several legends circulated by Trotsky and his co-thinkers.” Among them he placed particular emphasis on the “legend of the central role played by Trotsky in the October insurrection.”¹⁰ In order to “expose” this “legend,” Stalin announced that nearly all literature on the October insurrection amounted to “Arabian fairy tales.” He was particularly insulting when speaking of John Reed’s book, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, which Lenin had recommended as reading for all workers of the world. Stalin’s malicious attacks on Reed were caused by the many pages of the book that revealed Trotsky’s contribution to the victory of the October revolution. In a statement that indirectly criticized Stalin’s attacks, Krupskaya wrote:

Some think that we should no longer offer John Reed to our youth. ... Having read John Reed, however, a young communist will grasp the spirit of the revolution more quickly and profoundly than if he reads dozens of resolutions and protocols.¹¹

While “exposing” the “legend” of Trotsky’s role, Stalin remained silent about his own personal assessment of Trotsky’s role contained in the article, “The October Revolution,” which he published on the first anniversary of October. Stalin wrote:

All the work on the practical organization of the insurrection was carried out under the direct leadership of the Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, comrade

Trotsky. One can say with certainty that, for the rapid shift of the garrison to the side of the Soviet and the capable direction of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party is obliged first and foremost to comrade Trotsky.¹²

Now, however, Stalin was asserting:

Trotsky did not play any special role in the October uprising, nor could he do so. Being chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, he merely carried out the will of the corresponding party authorities, who directed every step that Trotsky took.¹³

In order to support this thesis, Stalin for the first time made public and falsely interpreted the minutes of the CC meeting of 16 (29) October 1917, which reported the creation of a practical center composed of Sverdlov, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Bubnov, and Uritsky, for the organizational leadership of the uprising. "The tasks of the practical center: to direct all the practical organs of the uprising ..."¹⁴ From this statement it supposedly followed that leadership of the insurrection was provided by the "practical center," without the participation of Trotsky.

Later, this version grew into the myth of Stalin as the leader of the "center" of the October insurrection. Thus, during the 1930s, several works of art appeared depicting Sverdlov, Dzerzhinsky, Uritsky, and Bubnov (then, after Bubnov's arrest, only the first three) sitting or standing around Stalin and rapturously listening to his words. In 1939 Trotsky referred to the version of the "practical center" as the first, as yet careful, step toward the creation of the Stalinist myth. He wrote:

At a historical distance, the uprising in October seems much more planned and monolithic than it was in reality. In fact, there was no shortage of vacillation, searches for alternative paths, and accidental initiatives which did not develop any further. Thus, at an improvised night session of the Central Committee on 16 October, in the absence of the most important officials in the Petrograd Soviet, it was decided to enlarge the Soviet's staff of the insurrection with a supplementary party "center" consisting of Sverdlov, Stalin, Bubnov, Uritsky, and Dzerzhinsky. During the very same hours, a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet created a Military Revolutionary Committee, which from the moment of its creation performed such decisive work for the preparation of the insurrection that absolutely everyone, including its members, forgot about the "center" that had been planned the day before. ...

Nevertheless the old record of the minutes, discovered by chance in 1924 and then falsely interpreted, has served as the basis for the bureaucratic legend. All reference books, name indexes, and even the latest school textbooks describe the revolutionary “center,” with Stalin at its head. No one has attempted, even for decency’s sake, to explain where and when this center actually convened, what kind of directives it issued and to whom, whether or not it produced any minutes, and if so, where are they now? Here we have all the elements of the Moscow trials.¹⁵

Subsequently, ever newer and newer myths would pile up on the myth of the “practical center,” culminating in the assertion that Lenin and Stalin were the two leaders of the October Revolution. A. V. Snegov, the old Bolshevik who took an active part in the first wave of exposures of Stalinism, correctly pointed out that it had been possible to distort party history so cynically “only through the rivers of blood of honest communists.”¹⁶

Today, it is clear that the analysis of the basic stages of development of the Russian Revolution between February and October 1917 contained in Trotsky’s “Lessons of October” is fully corroborated by historical documents now familiar to us. Significantly, all honest historians of the October revolutions have “followed the tracks” of this analysis in their effort to purge this history of the innumerable Stalinist falsifications.

Immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, the first articles appeared that truthfully uncovered the history of the inner-party struggle of March–April, 1917. Yet not a year had passed before the Central Committee of the CPSU passed the resolution of 4 March 1957, “On the Journal *Voprosy Istorii*” [Questions of History], which suspended the process of restoring the historical truth about the October Revolution. After the Twenty-Second Congress in 1961, which initiated a new wave of “anti-cult” exposures, V. Evgrafov, A. Snegov and other researchers published articles that presented an objective elucidation of the inner-party struggle of 1917 and Stalin’s role in it. It was then that several documents to which Trotsky had referred in “The Lessons of October” were published in full for the first time — in particular, the minutes of the All-Russian meeting of party officials in March 1917.

- [1.](#) *Вопросы истории*, 1989, № 8, С. 4 [*Questions of History*, 1989, № 8, p. 4].
- [2.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сочинения*, Т. III, 1917, Часть I, М., 1924, С. XII [Leon Trotsky, *Works*, Volume 3, 1917, Part 1, Moscow, 1924, p. XII].
- [3.](#) Там же, С. XLII [Ibid., p. XLII].
- [4.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 159 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 7, “Draft Resolution of the Plenum of the CC RKP(b),” 24 October 1924, p. 159].
- [5.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 2 ноября [*Pravda*, 2 November 1924].
- [6.](#) Об «Уроках октября», М., 1925, С. 135–142 [On “*The Lessons of October*,” Moscow, 1925, pp. 135–142].
- [7.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 161 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 7, “Transcript of the Plenary Session of the Leningrad Gubkom of the RKP(b),” 10 November 1924, p. 161].
- [8.](#) *Правда*, 1924, 19 ноября [*Pravda*, 19 November 1924].
- [9.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 326–327 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 6, pp. 340–341].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 327 [Ibid., p. 341].
- [11.](#) Крупская, Н. К., К вопросу об «Уроках октября», *Правда*, 1924, 16 декабря [N. K. Krupskaya, “The Question of ‘Lessons of October,’” *Pravda*, 16 December 1924].
- [12.](#) *Правда*, 1918, 6 ноября [*Pravda*, 6 November 1918].
- [13.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 328 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 6, p. 342].
- [14.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [15.](#) *Бюллетень оппозиции*, 1939, № 77–78, «Искусство и революция», С. 7–8 [*Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1939, № 77–78, “Art and Revolution,” pp. 7–8].
- [16.](#) *Всесоюзное совещание историков*, М., 1964, С. 268 [*The All-Union Conference of Historians*, Moscow, 1964, p. 268].



A postcard from 1918 listing "Leaders of the Proletarian Revolution," showing Lenin, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky, Trotsky, Kamenev, and Sverdlov.

31. The Birth of the Myth of “Trotskyism”

In 1924, Trotsky's opponents were least of all interested in the content of the ideas expressed in “The Lessons of October.” Their reaction to the work was predetermined entirely by self-centered considerations and by fury over the way that Trotsky allowed himself to recall crucial mistakes committed in the past by people who by now had seized the main levers of power within the party and the Comintern. In accordance with their plans, the organizers of the “literary discussion” carried it far beyond the bounds of a polemic over questions concerning the history of the October Revolution. The main result was a warning to the party (and the entire world) that, throughout the whole history of the party, the main enemy of Leninism was, and still remained, Trotskyism.

In this regard, one must recall that, after Trotsky's entry into the Bolshevik Party, Lenin himself never once employed the concept of “Trotskyism.” When polemicizing with Trotsky over concrete questions that arose after October, Lenin never even hinted that the polemic was a continuation or recurrence of pre-October disagreements. Yet during the heated arguments within the party immediately after the October Revolution, those “old Bolsheviks” (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, and others) — who were inclined to accept the proposal of the Mensheviks and SRs for the formation of a “coalition government” without the participation of either Lenin or Trotsky — utilized, among others, the argument that earlier, Trotsky had not been a Bolshevik. Lenin thus

emphasized at a meeting of the Petrograd Committee of the party on 14 November 1917 that Trotsky had long understood the impossibility of a unification with the Mensheviks, “and since then there has not been a better Bolshevik.”¹ During the discussion on the trade unions in 1920–1921, Stalin and Zinoviev once again attempted to circulate the reference to Trotsky’s non-Bolshevik past. In response, several of Trotsky’s supporters reminded Zinoviev of his conduct in the period of the October Revolution.

Evidently fearing the repetition of such a personal polemic after his death, Lenin even gave his famous advice to the party in the “Testament”:

I remind you that the October episode involving Zinoviev and Kamenev was, of course, not accidental; but it should not be held against them personally, any more than Trotsky’s [earlier] non-Bolshevism.²

An unbiased reading of this fragment from Lenin’s letter reveals an essential nuance: Lenin was warning against using the earlier mistakes of these three party leaders as an argument in a polemic. But it was only in regard to Zinoviev and Kamenev that he warned that their mistake was not accidental, i.e., that it might be repeated.

From 1917 through 1923, there was no mention in the party of “Trotskyism.” Even during the 1923 discussion, the representatives of the majority, who often returned to the pre-revolutionary disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky, as a rule avoided the odious term of “Trotskyism.” The idea of “Trotskyism” does not occur in Stalin’s “classical” work, “The Foundations of Leninism,” first published in *Pravda* in April–May 1924. Nor did the triumvirate ever use the term at the Thirteenth Congress, even as they criticized Trotsky at length for his position in the recent discussion.

In post-October history, the term was galvanized for the first time and used to define the basic content and direction of the “literary discussion” of 1924. Matters were now presented in such a way that it seemed as if there had been a sharp opposition between Leninism and “Trotskyism” during the entire history of the party, an opposition involving all the

fundamental issues of the revolution and, most of all, the issue of the attitude toward the peasantry.

The main role in creating the “theory of original sin,” as Trotsky himself ironically referred to the idea of “Trotskyism,” belonged to Kamenev and Zinoviev. At the end of 1924, Zinoviev proclaimed that “The Lessons of October” was an attempt “to revise — or even to liquidate completely — the foundations of Leninism.”³ Applying this formula to all aspects of “Trotskyism,” to all of Trotsky’s ideas and writings, he spoke of

the evolution of Trotsky from a non-Bolshevik to an anti-Bolshevik, that is, the evolution of a man who always wanted (although he was not always able) to be a Bolshevik, but who now is gradually becoming an opponent of Bolshevism ... Indeed, what we have in Trotskyism is an ideological insurrection against Bolshevism. ... Whoever wants to build a party in an alliance with Trotsky, in collaboration with Trotskyism, which openly opposes Bolshevism, will retreat from the foundations of Leninism.⁴

In the “literary discussion with Trotskyism,” Zinoviev and Kamenev again chose the wrong course of action — one which would have the very worst consequences, not only for the fate of the party, but also for themselves. They made the most malicious and zealous contribution to discrediting Trotsky personally. Working hand-in-hand with Stalin — and much to the delight of the entire foreign and “internal” émigré communities — they spread the rumor that irreconcilable differences existed within the party leadership over fundamental issues of the revolution and socialist construction. Finally, they placed in Stalin’s hands a poisonous ideological weapon in the form of the myth of “Trotskyism,” which he would use in the future primarily against themselves, and then against any dissenting thought in the party or the international communist movement.

With the aid of this weapon, Stalin managed within a few years to attain absolute power in both the party and the country. He used it to exterminate nearly all of the old party guard and then, hundreds of thousands of Soviet and foreign communists. While the 1923 discussion unleashed the bogeyman of “factionalism” for the first time, the

discussion of 1924 tried out a second, more ominous, bogeyman: “Trotskyism.” Employed by Stalin and his close circle in the struggle against all subsequent oppositions, the connotations of “Trotskyism” became more and more sinister over time, gradually evolving from a synonym of “anti-Leninism” and “an anti-party spirit” to a synonym of “anti-Soviet counter-revolutionary activity.”

Shifting the discussion of 1924 onto the plane of a “struggle against Trotskyism” had far-reaching goals and consequences. From that point on, any member of the Russian Communist Party or other sections of the Comintern who agreed with Trotsky’s position on any concrete question was doomed to charges of “Trotskyism.” It was under the banner of a “struggle against Trotskyism” that Stalin and his close circle would carry out all the “purges” and campaigns of repression.

Hundreds of thousands of Soviet and foreign communists who never joined any oppositions, but, on the contrary, sincerely or through compulsion participated in struggles against them, nevertheless went to their deaths or to concentration camps with the label of “Trotskyist” — the most terrible stigma in both Russia and in the international communist movement. The tragedy of the situation of these communists, who had seriously believed in the “theory of original sin,” was deepened by their constant need to prove to their comrades in the party (and later, to investigators and judges) their complete lack of involvement in and even hostility to “Trotskyism.” This product of collective mythology became so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the masses that even Fyodor Raskolnikov — the only major Bolshevik figure who, at the height of the repressions in the 1930s, dared to break with Stalin and make public accusations against him more serious than any other former “Trotskyist” or Left Oppositionist of the 1920s dared to make — believed it was necessary, in his “Open Letter to Stalin” of 1939, to make an important reservation:

As you know, I was never a Trotskyist. On the contrary, I always waged an ideological struggle against all oppositions, both in print and at major conferences.⁵

The atmosphere of political hysteria, which accompanied all subsequent purges and mass repressions, had already clearly emerged during the “literary discussion” of 1924. In December of that year, Souvarine wrote from Moscow that the campaign to dishonor and discredit Trotsky had reached “an unbelievable degree of fury, shamelessness, and hatred.” “The country is literally flooded with so-called ‘anti-Trotskyist literature.’ All publications are competing with each other in servility.” In Souvarine’s opinion, the silence of Trotsky and other members of the 1923 Opposition, in response to the numerous attacks and insinuations of “Trotskyism,” had led to the following: the “sympathy for Trotsky is dissolving in ignorance and fear, but no one ... understands the goals of the campaign.”⁶

The “literary discussion with Trotskyism” can be called a “discussion” only in quotation marks. In reality, there was no dialog at all, but only a thoroughly orchestrated, one-sided, ideological campaign served by the entire party apparatus and all the organs of the party press. Trotsky’s supporters did not respond with a single article. Apparently, their silence occurred under the influence of Trotsky himself, who did not once respond publicly to the flood of open slander against him. It is true that, in November 1924, he wrote the article, “Our Differences,” in which he examined thoroughly all the charges against him and refuted all the falsifications and factual distortions circulated by his opponents. However, this article did not appear until the end of the 1980s, when it was pulled from Trotsky’s archive and published abroad. In “Our Differences” Trotsky emphasized:

If I had believed that my explanations might add fuel to the fire of discussion, or if I had been informed directly and openly by the comrades responsible for publishing the work, then I would have agreed not to publish it, despite the difficulty of remaining under the charges of liquidating Leninism.⁷

Here again one sees Trotsky’s familiar indecision, even confusion, in the face of an unprincipled conspiracy inspired by the “leading collective.” Nevertheless, one must consider the objective difficulty of Trotsky’s position: in the heated atmosphere created by the “leading collective” at the end of 1924, any response from Trotsky not only would

have provided a pretext for new frenzied attacks, but also would have immediately evoked new charges of factionalism and the creation of a “Trotskyist opposition.” (In fact, this is precisely what occurred one and a half years later, after the emergence of the oppositionist bloc).

Several of Trotsky’s close allies and co-thinkers felt that his publication of “The Lessons of October” was a tactical mistake, since it provided his opponents with a pretext to unleash a campaign against “Trotskyism.” Trotsky attached great significance to this charge; after the formation of the United Opposition bloc in 1926, he turned to Zinoviev at one of their factional meetings with a question:

“Tell me, had I not published ‘The Lessons of October,’ would there have been the so-called literary discussion against ‘Trotskyism,’ or not?”

Zinoviev answered without hesitation: “Of course. ‘The Lessons of October’ was merely a pretext. Without that particular pretext, there would have been another. The forms of the discussion would have been somewhat different, but that’s all.”⁸

Another point that Trotsky felt needed to be clarified was the conscious deception by Zinoviev and Kamenev of their allies, especially in Leningrad, who were not initiated into the conspiracy and the provocative intentions of the “troika” and the “Seven.” After drawing closer to him, Zinoviev told Trotsky more than once:

We pounded it in (i.e., the myth of Trotskyism – V. R.) deeper in Petrograd than anywhere else. Therefore it will be the most difficult to re-educate people there.⁹

After Kamenev and Zinoviev left the Opposition in 1927, Kuznetsov, a party member since 1908, wrote a letter in which he reminded them:

We know about the absolutely candid explanations given by Zinoviev and Lashevich at Kamenev’s apartment during the discussion in 1926 with the Leningrad comrades, who had expressed their fear over the ill-fated “Trotskyism.” Comrade Lashevich attacked the Leningrad comrades: “Why are you laying the blame on somebody else? After all, we ourselves made up ‘Trotskyism’ during the struggle against Trotsky. How is it you don’t want to understand that? You are only helping Stalin.”

Then Zinoviev, in his turn, tried to explain to these comrades the heart of the matter in approximately the following words:

You see, you must understand what was happening. There was a struggle for power. The trick was to link the old disagreements to the new issues. This is why “Trotskyism” was put forward.¹⁰

In order to verify the content of these discussions, Trotsky sent letters at the end of 1927 to his closest allies with the request to report whether they had heard similar explanations from Zinoviev and Kamenev of the reasons for the appearance of the myth of “Trotskyism.” The immediate pretext for Trotsky’s letters was the agreement by Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had thrown themselves to the mercy of the victorious Stalin, to fulfill his first requirement for re-admittance into the party: to revive the legend of “Trotskyism.”

In response to Trotsky’s request, Radek, Piatakov, and others gave written testimony that on many occasions they had heard directly from Zinoviev and Kamenev that they had “invented” “Trotskyism.” They admitted that they had artificially galvanized the old disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky in order to force Trotsky out of the leadership of the party. Recalling a similar conversation at a meeting of the United Opposition, Viktor Eltsin, an Oppositionist from the younger generation, wrote: “None of the supporters that were present from the 1925 group (‘Zinovievists’) objected. They all accepted Zinoviev’s statement as a well-known fact.”¹¹

Although faced by a multitude of complex domestic and foreign political problems that required immediate discussion and resolution, and only months following the loss of Lenin, the party found itself drawn into an investigation of age-old quotations that illustrated earlier disagreements between Trotsky and Lenin. From the very first days of the discussion, all party propaganda and instruction was reoriented toward “the study of the struggle against Trotskyism.” Kaganovich, who by that time had been promoted by Stalin and had become one of his most devoted and zealous accomplices, displayed particular zeal in the campaign. In November 1924, as chairman of the CC commission for the training of the new party members joining during the “Lenin enrollment,” Kaganovich demanded reducing the theoretical aspect of the program of party instruction, while significantly enlarging and

supplementing the parts pertaining to the “struggle against Trotskyism.” Kaganovich’s demands met the objection of Syrtsov, the director of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee, who declared that the program should not concentrate on the tactical disagreements of the present day. Krupskaya also objected, emphasizing that one cannot reduce all of Leninism to a struggle against “Trotskyism.” The commission’s majority, however, supported Kaganovich, and Syrtsov was soon removed from his post.¹² A bit later, by an order of Stalin, the political courses for the Red Army were revised. On 10 December 1924, Frunze reported to the CC that “in the political courses, Trotsky no longer figures as leader of the Red Army.”¹³

1. This passage in Lenin’s speech was deliberately removed from the first edition of the book, *The First Legal Petrograd Committee of Bolsheviks in 1917* (M.-L., 1927). Trotsky published a photocopy of the editor’s off-print of this edition, with the inscription “to be investigated” next to these words spoken by Lenin, in his book *The Stalin School of Falsification*. In Soviet historiography the minutes from this meeting were not included in academic works until the publication of a facsimile edition of Trotsky’s book in 1990. (See Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификации*, М., 1990, С. 114–115, 313). [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, New Park Publications, 1974, pp. 82–85].

2. Ленин, В. И., ПСС, Т. 45, С. 345 [Lenin, CW, Volume 36, “Letter to the Congress, II,” 25 December 1922, p. 595].

3. Сб. За ленинизм, М.-Л., С. 120 [*For Leninism*, M.-L., p. 120].

4. Правда, 1925, 5 февраля [*Pravda*, 5 February 1925].

5. Неделя, 1988, № 26 [*The Week*, 1988, № 26].

6. Эко, 1989, № 11, С. 168 [*Эко*, 1989, № 11, p. 168].

7. Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. 1, С. 111 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 1, p. 111].

8. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификации*, М., 1990, С. 102 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 72].

9. Там же, С. 103 [Ibid., p. 73].

10. II пленум ЦКК созыва XV съезда ВКП(б), М., 1928, С. 241 [*Second Plenum of the CCC called by the Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, Moscow, 1928, p. 241].

11. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификации*, М., 1990, С. 108 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 78].

12. Правда, 1990, 5 января [*Pravda*, 5 January 1990].

- [13.](#) *Октябрь*, 1988, № 11, С. 75 [*October*, 1988, № 11, p. 75].

32. The Struggle within the “Seven”

In spite of the “monolithic” nature of the “leading collective,” which had concentrated on the frenzied persecution of Trotsky, the authority of the latter had still not been undermined in the party masses, among workers, and students. At many party meetings, there were spontaneous protests against the unprincipled slandering of Trotsky. As P. Zalomov reported in a letter to the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles: “‘The Lessons of October’ have become a battle cry — the workers do not believe that Trotsky could oppose Leninism.”¹ Similar information from the party apparatus reached Stalin. On 27 December, Yaroslavsky wrote to him that, in Smolensk, one of the meetings with a report on Trotsky ended with a demonstration by students shouting, “Long live the chairman of the Sovnarkom, comrade Trotsky!”² Nikolai Uglov, first secretary of the Moscow Gubkom [Gubernia Committee], reported:

I fought for seven straight hours with Rafail at the party cell of VEK (a brake factory) and outdid him. It is true, many there are still against us. But the most important thing that was revealed at the meeting was this: ten of the factory workers had visited Trotsky and discussed with him the issues in the disputes.³

Sentiment of this kind became widely prevalent because Stalin and the CC majority, who persistently tried to convince the party of the incompatibility of “Trotskyism” with Leninism, nevertheless did not dare, it appears, to take the next logical organizational step: namely, to expel Trotsky from the party or, at least, from the CC or Politburo. Only Zinoviev and Kamenev, blinded by factional hatred, insisted on such a

step. As for Stalin, in his own public statements during this period, he occupied his favorite “centrist,” “conciliatory” position, by presenting himself as an advocate of mitigating the inner-party struggle. He concluded his speech, “Trotskyism or Leninism,” with the words:

There is talk of repressive measures against the Opposition and about the possibility of a split. This is nonsense, comrades. Our party is strong and powerful. It will not allow any splits. As for repressive measures, I am resolutely opposed to them. What we need now is not repressive measures, but an all-out ideological struggle against renascent Trotskyism.⁴

At this point Stalin still feared the unforeseen consequences that might result from open measures of repression against Trotsky (after all, party democracy at that time had still not yet been completely suppressed, and such measures might encounter resistance from a significant part of the party). Stalin’s true designs, however, were revealed in a secret letter from Trotsky to the CC Politburo and CCC Presidium in 1932. After Kamenev and Zinoviev had gone over to the Opposition, they told Trotsky that, at a high point in the struggle against “Trotskyism” (at the end of 1924 or beginning of 1925), Stalin called a narrow meeting at which he posed the question of carrying out a terrorist act against Trotsky.

The arguments *for* such an act were clear and obvious. The main argument *against* it was that there were too many young, self-sacrificing Trotskyists who might respond with counter-terrorist acts of their own.⁵

In a diary entry from 18 February 1935, Trotsky described his conversations with Zinoviev and Kamenev in greater detail:

“Do you think Stalin is now considering how to reply to your arguments?” Kamenev said, approximately ... “You’re wrong. He’s thinking about how to destroy you.”

“?”

“Morally and, if possible, physically as well. To slander you, or to implicate you in a military conspiracy; and then, when the ground is prepared, to contrive a terrorist act. Stalin is conducting the war on a different plane from you. Your weapons won’t work against him.”

On another occasion, the same Kamenev said to me: “I know him (Stalin) all too well from our former work together, our mutual exile, our

collaboration in the 'troika.' As soon as we broke with Stalin, Zinoviev and I compiled something like a testament, in which we warn that in case of our 'unexpected' death, Stalin should be considered responsible. This document is kept in a safe place. I advise you to do the same."

Zinoviev told me, not without embarrassment:

"You think Stalin has not discussed the question of exterminating you physically? He has both thought about it and discussed it thoroughly. One and the same thought has stopped him: the youth will place responsibility on him personally and will respond with terrorist acts. Therefore he considered it necessary to scatter the ranks of the Oppositionist youth. But what is postponed is not abandoned. ... You should take necessary measures."⁶

One may draw several significant conclusions from these facts. First, in the heat of the "ideological" struggle against "Trotskyism," Zinoviev and Kamenev possessed sufficient evidence of Stalin's criminal profile, but, concerned with preserving their own power, they did not shrink from discussing with him his most villainous designs.⁷ Consequently, when referencing this period, one can speak with full justification not of their tragic guilt (their sincere and fatal error), but of their out-and-out criminal guilt (their readiness to "resolve" the inner-party struggle by means of a terrorist act). Only after concluding that they might become the victims of a similar conspiracy themselves, did they inform Trotsky about the discussion of Stalin's terrorist plan. Having earlier accepted the conditions proposed by Stalin for an insidious political game — that is, at the time when they still shared full power with him — Zinoviev and Kamenev logically accepted the conditions for the Stalinist game later, as well, when they became its victims.

Second, the facts presented here clarify the reasons for Stalin's pathological fear of counter-terrorist acts at a time when he had shifted to direct police methods of repression, and then to the physical annihilation of his real and potential opponents in the party. Stalin logically could expect that some group of oppositionists, especially from the ranks of the youth, would answer the state terror he initiated with a terrorist act directed against him. Therefore, if, before the seizure of absolute power, he resorted only to concealed or secret murders (for example, the murder of Frunze during a surgical operation, to be

discussed below), then after attaining full power he preferred to destroy his opponents with the help of falsified trials in which the defendants would have to “confess” to their supposedly terrorist or other sinister designs. Thus arose the most terrible and effective of Stalinist provocations: the system of accusations and “confessions” to non-existent crimes. If in such an atmosphere an Oppositionist had resolved to murder Stalin, then the repressive machine would have begun to work with still more terrible force. Moreover, an attempt on Stalin’s life most certainly would have dispelled any doubts among public opinion both in the USSR and abroad that the confessions by former leaders of the Opposition to the creation of terrorist organizations were sincere. This was precisely the real, concealed purpose of the Moscow trials: to attribute Stalin’s own designs to his ideological opponents.

During the “literary discussion” of 1924, such a scenario of events would hardly have seemed plausible to any Bolshevik, including most likely Stalin himself. Already by that time, however, the machine of political provocations and ideological falsifications had begun to work at full steam. These falsifications were publicized in an enormous quantity of books, pamphlets, and articles.

The political-propaganda campaign culminated in the Plenum of the CC and CCC on 17–20 January 1925. The meeting was supposed to sum up the “literary discussion” and also to decide upon organizational measures to be taken against Trotsky. Trotsky himself, who was seriously ill at the time, did not attend the meeting; instead, just before the meeting began he sent a letter to the CC explaining his attitude toward the “discussion.” He wrote:

I felt and still feel, that I could have brought to the discussion rather solid objections — both factual and principled — against the charges that I wish to “revise Leninism” and “diminish”(!) Lenin’s role. I decided not to answer these charges in the given setting, however, not only because of my illness, but also because, under the conditions of the present discussion, any statement from me, regardless of its content, character, or tone, would merely serve to deepen the polemic, and make it even sharper. Even now, as I evaluate the entire course of the discussion, I think that, in spite of the multitude of false and

utterly monstrous charges raised against me, my silence was correct from the standpoint of the party's general interests.

Refusing to admit to charges of defending a special, non-Bolshevik ideology ("Trotskyism"), Trotsky wrote that "for me, the very word itself appeared completely unexpectedly, only during the discussion surrounding my book on 1917."

Addressing the often-repeated declarations that he was supposedly claiming a "special position in the party," Trotsky wrote:

Without evaluating these assertions, I categorically declare that I am willing to fulfill any assignment by the CC at any post or outside of any post and, it follows, under conditions of party control. There is no particular reason to attempt to prove that, after the most recent discussion, the interests at hand demand my immediate dismissal from duties as chair of the Revolutionary Military Council.⁸

Having this testimony of Trotsky's complete loyalty to the party, the January Plenum adopted a resolution combining all of the accusations and slander circulated during the "literary discussion." The Plenum evaluated the "sum total of comrade Trotsky's statements against the party" as "an attempt to supplant Leninism with Trotskyism" and declared the "discussion" concluded. Nevertheless it called for the "continuation and development of party work toward explaining from bottom to top the anti-Bolshevik character of Trotskyism." Henceforth such "work" would be conducted not only in party, but also non-party, organizations. As Zinoviev noted with satisfaction:

The CC unanimously resolved that our task is to explain to workers and peasants outside the party that Trotsky's ideas would sever the alliance between workers and peasants.²

The decisions of the January Plenum had important practical consequences. "It had already become impossible to serve as director of a factory, secretary of a factory cell, the chair of a district executive committee, an accountant, or even a typist without recommending oneself as an anti-Trotskyist."¹⁰ Even many of those who understood the false nature of the "anti-Trotskyist" campaign found it necessary to declare their hostility to "Trotskyism" for fear of expulsion from the party

and the loss of their job. This meant that political repression began to be used widely in both the party and the country, which became an open invitation to double-dealing. A similar political campaign in all the various parties in the Comintern, first initiated at the end of 1923, began to be conducted with still greater intensity. Some leaders were removed from their posts, while others were assigned to replace them exclusively on the basis of their attitude toward Trotsky.

Disagreement arose at the January Plenum only on the question of what kind of organizational measures to take against Trotsky. Long before the plenum, *Pravda* began to publish the resolutions of local party organizations on the results of the “discussion with Trotskyism.” Strikingly unanimous in their ideological-political evaluation of “Trotskyism,” these resolutions were divided into three groups according to the disciplinary measures they each proposed to take against Trotsky. The first group of resolutions proposed to expel Trotsky from the party. The second proposed to “limit itself” to his removal from the Politburo and from his position as chair of the Revolutionary Military Council. The third group of resolutions proposed to conditionally leave Trotsky in the Politburo until the Fourteenth Party Congress, after removing him from the posts of People’s Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs and Chair of the Revolutionary Military Council.

Inside the Central Committee, the first and second proposals received support only from Zinoviev and Kamenev. Stalin therefore preferred again to pretend to take the more “moderate” position (he practiced a similar maneuver during the first stages of the struggle and with all the subsequent oppositions). He found this position necessary to begin “to drive into the opposition” still another section of the party.

In the future, Stalin would date the emergence of the “new” or “Leningrad opposition” from the January Plenum of the CC in 1925. At the Fourteenth Congress, in December of the same year, Stalin presented his version of the new split within the Central Committee, designating the following moment as the “beginning of our disagreement”:

We in the CC majority ... had a struggle of sorts with the Leningrad comrades and convinced them to throw out of their resolution the point

about the expulsion (of Trotsky from the party – V. R.). Some time after that we met in a CC plenum, where the Leningrad comrades, along with comrade Kamenev, demanded Trotsky's immediate expulsion from the Politburo; we did not agree with this proposal by the opposition (already the "opposition"! – V. R.); we won a majority on the CC and limited ourselves to the removal of comrade Trotsky from the post of People's Commissar of the Military. We did not agree with Zinoviev and Kamenev because we knew that the policy of expulsion is fraught with great dangers for the party, that the method of amputation, the method of blood-letting — and they were demanding blood — is dangerous and infectious: today they remove one from the party, tomorrow another, the day after tomorrow a third — then what will we have left in the party?¹¹

Let us note that, when Stalin mentioned "the demand for blood," he was merely suggesting the proposal to expel Trotsky from the Politburo.

Much later, at the July Plenum of the CC and CCC in 1926, which discussed the demand of the "opposition bloc" to publish Lenin's "Testament," Stalin explained the motives of his "conciliatory position" in a different way. He declared:

One section of our party demanded extreme measures against Trotsky, while I was against removing Trotsky from the Politburo. At that time, I occupied not the extreme, but rather the moderate, flank against Trotsky. ... Like the rest of the CC majority, I defended the position that Trotsky should remain in the Politburo — and he remained.

Stalin explained that he had occupied such a position because he was "trying to keep in mind Lenin's directives to me with regard to Trotsky."¹² Naturally, in both instances, Stalin failed to mention his earlier declaration, which he made before the January Plenum to a meeting of the "leading collective," that Trotsky's expulsion from the Politburo must be carefully prepared: "The moment to expel Trotsky has still not arrived. In the party and the country ... such a step would be incorrectly understood."¹³

In a secret telegram to the Ukrainian CC sent before the January Plenum, Stalin described the differences within the "leading group":

The majority believes that it would be better not to remove Trotsky from the Politburo, but issue a warning that if he again acts contrary to the will of the CC and its resolutions, Trotsky will be removed immediately from the

Politburo and from work within the CC. The majority believes that if Trotsky remains in the CC, he will be less dangerous within the Politburo than outside of it; the minority believes that it is necessary to oust him immediately from the Politburo, while leaving him in the CC. As for me, I side with the opinion of the majority.¹⁴

However, even after reading this letter, the plenum of the Ukrainian CC resolved by a vote of twenty-seven to two that it was necessary to remove Trotsky from the Politburo. Insofar as this seemingly private issue had assumed, as we will see later, major significance after the January Plenum of the CC, the General Secretary of the Ukrainian CC Kvirring handed in his resignation in March 1925. He requested to be relieved of his duties “because the Ukrainian CC’s resolution regarding Trotsky and my own position on this question have created abnormal conditions for my work as CC secretary.”¹⁵

At the January Plenum, the majority of CC members — only Rakovsky and Piatakov voted against — and all the CCC members (with one abstention) voted to remove Trotsky from his post as Chair of the Revolutionary Military Council and to allow him to remain in the Politburo. It was also decided to postpone the question of Trotsky’s future work in the CC until the next party congress, having warned him that:

In case of a new attempt ... to violate or fail to fulfill party resolutions, the CC will be forced, without waiting for a congress, to acknowledge that Trotsky’s continued presence as a Politburo member is impossible; it will raise the question of his removal from work in the CC before a united session of the CC and the CCC.¹⁶

For several months after the plenum, Trotsky remained without any practical work. Only in May did he suddenly receive three appointments to secondary posts: Chair of the Main Concessions Committee, Director of Electro-Technical Management, and Chair of the Scientific-Technical Department of VSNKh [Supreme Council of the National Economy].

As Zinoviev declared soon after the January Plenum, the CC “on the practical level” passed merely “the minimum of resolutions that should have been passed. The CC and the CCC decided that it would be more expedient for the party to leave the decisive word on Trotsky’s work in

the CC to the party congress, which to the greatest extent represents the entire party.”¹⁷ In fact, the next party congress threatened the position of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their supporters; Stalin launched a systematic attack against them soon after the January Plenum.

It appears that, by the January Plenum, Zinoviev and Kamenev had already begun to feel very uneasy about the extreme concentration of power in Stalin’s hands. This obviously would explain Kamenev’s proposal at the plenum to replace Trotsky as Chair of the Revolutionary Military Council with Stalin. This maneuver, however, was immediately cut short by Stalin, who succeeded in having the proposal rejected, thus preserving his position as General Secretary. Stalin understood perfectly well that within the new alignment of power, the decisive levers of control over the country were concentrated not in managing the army, but in the administration of the party apparatus.

Frunze was appointed to the post of People’s Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs and Chair of the Revolutionary Military Council, while Voroshilov, who also retained his post as Commander of the Moscow Military District, was appointed as his deputy. In October 1925, however, Frunze suddenly died during a surgical operation. The story of his demise unfolded in the following way.

Frunze had been suffering from a stomach ulcer, but the doctors did not recommend an operation because of his weak heart, which might not withstand chloroform. Stalin ordered a consultation of specially chosen doctors, who recommended surgical intervention. The Politburo approved their decision. Frunze was forced to submit, and proceeded to meet his end.

A friend of Frunze’s, the old Bolshevik Gamburg, wrote in his memoirs:

I tried to convince Mikhail Vasilievich to refuse the operation, since the very thought of it depressed him, but he merely shook his head: Stalin insists on the operation, he says that I have to get rid of the ulcer once and for all.^{18, 19}



Mikhail Frunze
(1885–1925)



Boris Pilnyak
(1894–1938)



Aleksandr Voronsky
(1884–1937)

Evidently, A. K. Voronsky, his close friend from the Ivanovo-Voznesensk underground and an oppositionist, tried even more strenuously to talk Frunze out of the operation. Under Voronsky's influence, Boris Pilnyak wrote *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon*, which gives a highly authentic account of the illness and death of Frunze on the operating table. It is hard to say why the editorial board of the journal *Новый мир* [New World], consisting of Lunacharsky, Skvortsov-Stepanov, and Polonsky, dared to publish this work, which depicted with great sympathy the image of Army Commander Gavrilov (the prototype of Frunze), and in absolutely different tones the image of “the unbending one” from “the controlling troika”²⁰ who gave the order for his operation. Nevertheless, the story appeared in the fifth issue of *New World* for 1926. Only when the issue had already begun to arrive at subscribers, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon* was cut out of a major part of the press run and replaced by another work.

The memoirs of Anna M. Larina provide the testimony of Frunze's mother, who said that Stalin removed Frunze because the latter “had acknowledged Trotsky's authority until very recently and treated him with great respect.”²¹ After Frunze's death, the post of Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council passed to Voroshilov, who recommended

himself as one of the members of the “leading collective” most devoted to Stalin.

In a way, the completion of the “literary discussion” was an episode at the end of 1925, when Trotsky made another “rotten compromise” with the majority of the Politburo. This episode was prompted by the publication abroad of the book by the American journalist Max Eastman, *Since Lenin Died*. In it, he described the struggle for power in the Kremlin and the methods used in the struggle against “Trotskyism.” In the book, Eastman also published excerpts from Lenin’s “Testament” and Krupskaya’s letter to Trotsky from 28 January 1924. Later, Trotsky described Eastman and the step he had taken in the following way:

Max Eastman, a revolutionary American of the John Reed type, one of the true friends of the October Revolution ... took the side of the Opposition in 1923 and openly defended it against political accusations, and particularly against insinuations and slander. ... Eastman felt that the Opposition was leading an insufficiently energetic struggle and raised a campaign abroad at his own risk.²²

After reading Eastman’s book, Stalin sent a letter to members of the Politburo in which he accused Trotsky of divulging secret documents and of striving to create a split in the CC. Trotsky, however, felt that Lenin’s “Testament” was neither a state nor a party secret. Publishing it was not a crime. On the contrary, the crime was hiding it from the party and the working class. Nonetheless, he signed an article foisted on him by the majority of the Politburo and edited by the latter, which disavowed Eastman’s publication and presented the “Testament” and its fate in an absolutely false light. The article states, in particular:

In several places in his book, Eastman says that the Central Committee “concealed” from the party a number of exceptionally important documents written by Lenin in the last period of his life (this includes letters on the national question, the so-called “Testament,” and others): this can be called nothing other than slander against the CC of our party. From Eastman’s words, one could conclude that Vladimir Ilyich intended these letters, which contained inner-party advice, for the press. In actual fact, this is absolutely not true. From the time of his illness, Vladimir Ilyich often turned to the leading party organs and its congress with proposals, letters, and so forth. All of these letters and proposals, it goes without saying, were always brought to the

attention of the delegates to the Twelfth and Thirteenth Party Congresses, and always exercised, of course, due influence on the decisions of the party. If not all of these letters were printed, then it is because they were not intended by their author for the press. Vladimir Ilyich left no “Testament,” and the very character of his attitude to the party, as well as the character of the party itself, precluded the possibility of such a “Testament.” Under the guise of a “Testament” in the émigré, foreign, and Menshevik press, what is usually mentioned (in a form that is distorted beyond recognition) is one of the letters from Vladimir Ilyich containing advice of an organizational nature. The Thirteenth Party Congress paid close attention to this letter, as it did to all others, and drew from it conclusions appropriate to the conditions and circumstances of the moment. Any talk of a concealed or violated “Testament” is a malicious lie, entirely directed against the actual will of Vladimir Ilyich and the interests of the party he created.²³

In explaining a few years later the reasons for his “rotten compromise,” Trotsky wrote:

Insofar as the entire leading group of the Opposition considered it inexpedient at that time to initiate an *open* political struggle, and therefore made a number of compromises, it naturally could not initiate and develop the struggle because of the private issue around Eastman. ... That is why, *on the decision of the leading group of the Opposition*, I signed the declaration about Max Eastman, foisted on me by the majority of the Politburo under the threat of an ultimatum: either sign the declaration as it is, or enter into open struggle on its account. ... In any case, my declaration about Eastman at that time can be understood only as a component part of what was then our line toward conciliation and appeasement.²⁴

However, this striving toward “conciliation and appeasement” by indulging lies and falsification inevitably turned into a new strengthening of the positions of the Stalin faction and facilitated the concealment of the “Testament” from the party in the future. At the United Plenum of the CC and CCC in October 1927, which discussed for the last time the question of publishing the “Testament,” Stalin read an excerpt from Trotsky’s article in *Bolshevik* and cynically declared: “It seems clear? This is written by Trotsky and nobody else. On what basis do Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev now wag their tongues, claiming that the party and its CC ‘are hiding’ Lenin’s ‘Testament?’”²⁵

Recently published letters from Stalin to Molotov show that Stalin insistently hastened the publication of Trotsky's article, first in the foreign press and then in the USSR. From these letters, one can conclude that, as he was putting pressure on Trotsky, Stalin was playing the role of his "defender" from Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had demanded further repressive measures against Trotsky. "Kamenev and Zinoviev want to create conditions leading to the necessary exit of Trotsky from the CC," wrote Stalin to Molotov after the publication of Trotsky's article against Eastman. "But they won't manage to do it, for they don't have the information for that. With his answer to Eastman's book, Trotsky predetermined his own fate, that is, he saved himself."²⁶

Trotsky's article was supplemented by the publication in *Bolshevik* of Krupskaya's article, which stated:

Enemies of the VKP(b) are trying to use the "Testament" in order to discredit today's leaders of the party, in order to discredit the party itself. M. Eastman is strenuously pleading about this; he is directly slandering the CC by shouting that the testament was concealed.²⁷

Krupskaya, who shared the positions of the Zinoviev group at this time, was almost justifying herself for the fact that "under the influence ... of her mood," she had written a warm personal letter to Trotsky after Lenin's death.



Max Eastman
(1883–1969)



Lev Trotsky
(1879–1940)



Nadezhda Krupskaya
(1869–1939)

Publication of the articles by Trotsky and Krupskaya in *Bolshevik* seemingly crowned the series of victories Stalin had won in the course of the “literary discussion with Trotskyism.” First of all, he had received ideological armament that he would use in the future to remove from the political arena, and then physically eliminate, all his competitors and opponents in the party. Second, his most serious and principled opponent had been pushed aside into minor posts in the leadership of the party and the nation. Third, Stalin had begun to “drive into an opposition” one more influential group in the party, headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Immediately after the January Plenum, rumors began to circulate in circles of the apparatus that personal disagreement inside the “Seven” — about whether Trotsky should be removed from the Politburo — was growing into a split within the “leading collective.” How limited the information was about events in the ruling upper echelons — information reaching even the highest links in the local party apparatus — can be seen in a letter from members of the CC and CCC of the Ukrainian Communist Party to the Central Committee of the RKP(b), sent in February of 1925. In this letter, the Ukrainian party leaders write that they had learned “from incidental sources” that “the fissure that had appeared at the last CC plenum of the Russian Communist Party had not only not been smoothed over,” but “that people were already talking unequivocally about ‘Stalinists’ and ‘Zinovievists.’” In connection with the decision about Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev “are developing a theory about Bolsheviks and semi-Bolsheviks (semi-Trotskyists)”; they are talking about “a compromise” made in the plenum’s resolution, and “around this question there is a group struggle which, if it develops further, threatens to create two factions within the Leninist majority of the Party.” The letter expressed its concern:

All the growing rumors around this conflict threaten the party with very serious shocks. We see no reasons that would prompt comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev to speak out against Stalin and the other comrades in the ruling group.^{[28](#)}

Gilinsky, the secretary of the Gomel Gubernia Committee, wrote to Stalin:

In recent times, a large quantity of hearsay and, evidently, false rumors are leaking out of Moscow into the provinces. People are talking about disagreements along the lines of “Stalin – Zinoviev,” and these disagreements supposedly exist on all basic questions of the party’s line (not only about the relation in the future toward comrade Trotsky.²⁹

Rumors of this kind had been circulating so widely among apparatchiki that the April 1925 CC Plenum sent a confidential letter to local party organizations addressing the inquiries that were coming into the CC: “Are there now any kind of serious political disagreements inside our Central Committee and its leading core, and if so, what are these disagreements?” The letter attributes the circulation of “rumors” about disagreements, it goes without saying, to “Trotskyists,” who had not reconciled with the decisions of the January Plenum that had summarized “the results of the new attack by Trotskyists on the party.” These “Trotskyists” had allegedly begun to inflate “episodic differences within the majority of our CC.” The plenum had proposed that “local organizations and all Leninists fight decisively against these rumors and bits of gossip.”

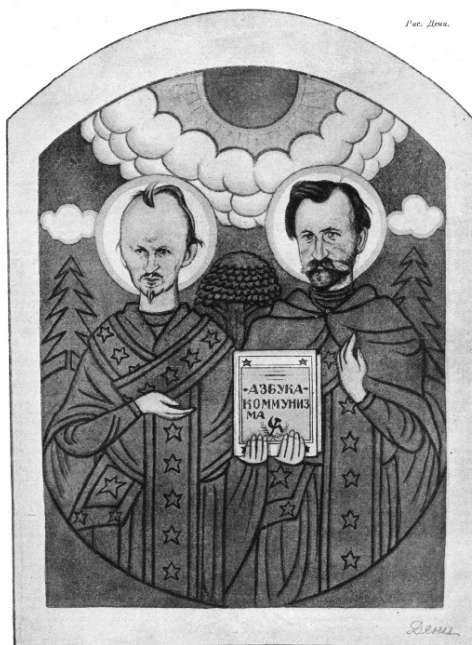
Statements in the letter testify to the temporary compromise reached at the plenum. These include references to “the unanimity of the entire Leninist majority of the Central Committee” and to the necessity of struggling against attempts to “discredit the Leningrad organization of our party,” that is, the Zinoviev group.³⁰

However, there was a very real basis for the “rumors.” Leading up to the Fourteenth Congress, the Zinovievists had tried to educate their comrades, especially in Leningrad, in the spirit that any “leniency” toward Trotsky bore an “anti-Bolshevik” character. Zinoviev and Kamenev raised the question of the “troika” once again beginning to decide in advance all basic political problems. Stalin rejected this proposal, counting on support from Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy, with whom he had formed a new high-level bloc.

1. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 176 ["P. A. Zalomov to The Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles," 18 December 1924, *Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 7, p. 176].
2. Там же, С. 177 ["E. M. Yaroslavsky to I. V. Stalin," 27 December 1924, *Ibid.*, p. 177].
3. Там же, С. 176 ["N. A. Uglanov to I. V. Stalin," 18 December 1924, *Ibid.*, p. 176].
4. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 6, С. 357 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 6, p. 373].
5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Дневники и письма*, Эрмитаж, 1986, С. 41 [Cf. "A Letter to the Politburo," 4 January 1932, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, Pathfinder Press, 1973, p. 19].
6. Там же, С. 72–73 [*Ibid.*, pp. 72–72; Cf. *Trotsky's Diary in Exile. 1935*, Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 23–24].
7. Moreover, it was not accidental that Stalin chose Zinoviev and Kamenev for discussion of his sinister plan. Only a year earlier, they had initiated plans that, although not as criminal, were also highly unseemly. At the October Plenum of 1927, for example, Bukharin reminded Zinoviev how the latter had proposed in 1923 to arrest Trotsky (*Pravda*, 2 November 1927).
8. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 8, С. 183–185 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 8, "L. D. Trotsky to Plenum of the CC RKP(b)," 15 January 1925, pp. 183–185].
9. *Правда*, 1925, 5 февраля [*Pravda*, 5 February 1925].
10. Троцкий, Л. Д., «Что и как произошло?», С. 34 [Cf. *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, Pathfinder Press, 1975, p. 42].
11. *Четырнадцать съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической партии (большевиков)*, С. 502 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 390].
12. Сб. *Трудные вопросы истории*, М., 1991, С. 71 [*Difficult Questions of History*, Moscow, 1991, p. 71].
13. Андреев, А. А., *Воспоминания, письма*, М., 1985, С. 155 [A. A. Andreev, *Memoirs, Letters*, Moscow, 1985, p. 155].
14. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 8, С. 183 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1991, № 8, "I. V. Stalin to E. I. Kviring," 11 January 1925, p. 183].
15. Там же [*Ibid.*].
16. *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях*, Т. 3, С. 330 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, p. 330].
17. *Правда*, 1925, 5 февраля [*Pravda*, 5 February 1925].
18. Гамбург, И. К., *Так это было*, М., 1965, С. 182 [I. K. Gamburg, *The Way It Was*, Moscow, 1965, p. 182].
19. Similar accounts appear in several other memoirs published in the book, М. В. Фрунзе. *Воспоминания друзей и соратников*, М., 1985 [M. V. Frunze. *Memoirs of Friends and Comrades-in-Arms*, Moscow, 1985].
20. Пильняк, Б., *Повести и рассказы*, М., 1991, С. 477–478 [B. Pilnyak, *Novellas and Stories*, Moscow, 1991, p. 477–478].
21. *Знамя*, 1988, №12, С. 101 [*Znamia*, 1988, № 12, p. 101].

- [22.](#) «Письмо Л. Д. Троцкого Н. И. Муралову» [“Letter from L. D. Trotsky to N. I. Muralov”], *Бюллетень оппозиции*, 1931, № 19, С. 38 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1928–29), Pathfinder Press, 1981, p. 222].
- [23.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., По поводу книги Истмена «После смерти Ленина», *Большевик*, 1925, № 16, С. 67–70 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923–25), Pathfinder Press, 1975, p. 312.].
- [24.](#) «Письмо Л. Д. Троцкого Н. И. Муралову», *Бюллетень оппозиции*, 1931, № 19, С. 38–39 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1928–29), Pathfinder Press, 1981, p. 223].
- [25.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 175 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, p. 180].
- [26.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 191 [Information of the CC of the CPSU, 1990, № 9, “I. V. Stalin to V. M. Molotov,” 18 August 1925, p. 191].
- [27.](#) *Большевик*, 1925, № 16, С. 73 [N. Krupskaya, “To the Editors of the Newspaper *Sunday Worker*,” 7 July 1925, *Bolshevik*, 1925, № 16, p. 73].
- [28.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 8, С. 188–190 [Information of the CC of the CPSU, 1991, № 8, “Members of the CC and CCC KP(b)U to Members of the CC RKP(b),” no later than 23 February 1925, p. 188–190].
- [29.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 8, С. 192 [Information of the CC of the CPSU, 1991, № 8, A. L. Gilinsky to I. V. Stalin, 2 April 1925, p. 192].
- [30.](#) Там же, С. 193–195 [Ibid., “Secret Letter of the April 1925 Plenum of the CC to Local Party Organizations,” 26 April 1925, p. 193–195].

Рис. Дени.



„Кирилл и Мефодий“ (Н. Бухарин и Е. Преображенский).
(Коммунистические святые).

Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, co-authors of *The ABC of Communism* in 1919, depicted by Deni as Saints Kirill and Methodius. Within a few years, as outlined in this chapter, they would strongly disagree on many economic and political issues.

33. The Duumvirate

Soon after the “literary discussion,” the epicenter of inner-party disagreements was occupied not only by “political maneuvers” and “a polemic built on recollections,” but also by fundamental questions about the paths of future socioeconomic development of the country.

Lenin could no longer participate in the party and state leadership right at the moment when the international situation of Soviet Russia had noticeably improved (in 1923 and 1924, capitalist states began to recognize the USSR); the most terrible consequences of the post-war collapse and the mass famine remained in the past. That meant that the collective thought of the party could concentrate on solving the problems of socialist construction in peaceful conditions, although the anticipated assistance in the form of victorious proletarian revolution in the leading capitalist countries did not follow.

Because of the unprincipled struggle for power unleashed by the triumvirate, two of the most favorable years (1923 and 1924) for the adjustment of economic strategy and tactics were lost. The Politburo majority essentially rejected the line for developing the NEP which had been approved at the Twelfth Party Congress in the resolution based on Trotsky’s report on industry: strengthening the planning element in the direction of the national economy; accelerating the industrialization of the country; narrowing, thereby, the “scissors” between prices of industrial and agricultural goods; and strengthening on that basis the “smychka” [alliance] between town and country.

In the polemic with the Opposition at the Thirteenth Congress, Kamenev declared: "In response to the question of where, then, is our plan, I answer: our plan ... is embodied in two words: in monetary reform."¹ Of course, the monetary reform, which resulted in a stable, convertible currency, the chervonets, was the most important victory of NEP, as well as a weapon for its implementation. However, the identification of the currency reform with planning reflected an extremely narrowed understanding of the very idea of the planned management of the national economy.

At the same time, the CC majority, which in words had rejected the economic platform of the 1923 Opposition, in fact partially implemented its proposals about limiting the chaos of market competition and the uncontrolled growth of private capital. Control was strengthened over capitalist elements in the area of industry and trade. State organs in the provinces received the right to establish an upper limit on retail prices which Nepmen were required to observe.

In 1925, however, new tasks were advanced that were connected with the development of small-scale production in agriculture and with its consequent increase of social differentiation in the countryside. The ways to solve these problems became one of the key issues in the new discussion, during which the "Seven" collapsed and a new bloc appeared at the top. One of the reasons for the formation of this new bloc was the attempt to force the Zinoviev group out of the party leadership. Another reason was an attempt to implement the new political line established, as we will see later, at the Fourteenth Party Conference.

Two figures became Stalin's allies in the struggle against Zinoviev and Kamenev: Tomsky, who had chaired the Trade Union Council (VTsSPS) since 1919; and Rykov, who had taken over as chair of Sovnarkom after Lenin's death and who, in 1926, would replace Kamenev in the second highest government post—chair of the Council of Labor and Defense. The leading role among members of the future "Bukharinist troika" belonged to Bukharin. Unlike the other participants in the new bloc, who had not produced any significant theoretical works, Bukharin acted in those years as the main theoretician and ideologue of the party. The place

of the former triumvirate—the “leading core” of the collapsed “Seven”—was now occupied by a duumvirate, consisting of Stalin and Bukharin.

A clearly defined demarcation of functions was observed between the members of the duumvirate. Stalin, as before, concentrated in his hands the entire organizational work of the party, heading the Orgburo and the CC Secretariat. Bukharin, as the chief editor of *Pravda* since 1918, directed political-ideological work and took over as chair of the Executive Committee of the Comintern after 1926, when Zinoviev was removed from that post.

Right up to 1928, the official popularity and influence of Bukharin was virtually equal to that enjoyed by Stalin. In 1927, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (one of whose editors was Bukharin) published an article on Bukharin written by his pupil Maretsky. In this article, which occupied fourteen pages, Bukharin was named as “one of the leaders of the RCP and the Comintern ... an outstanding theoretician of communism.”²

During the first years of the revolution Bukharin invariably occupied the most “leftist” positions in the Party. As leader of the “Left Communist” faction, he called in 1918 for “revolutionary war” as a means of accelerating the international revolution in which he saw the only possibility for saving the Russian Revolution. After the signing of the Brest peace, Bukharin, along with several other “Left Communists,” extended his differences with Lenin into the sphere of economic policy. He insisted that Lenin’s conception of state capitalism in 1918, which represented, as it later turned out, the beginning of the conception of NEP, was the expression of a “fatal petty-bourgeois policy.”

In the discussion on the trade unions, Bukharin spoke on behalf of a “buffer” platform, close to the platform of Trotsky. By the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921, however, he accused Trotsky of a right deviation, declaring that no stabilization of capitalism had occurred or could occur, and that an unbroken series of capitalist crises and revolutions would unfold before the worldwide victory of socialism. A year earlier, Bukharin had published the book *The Economics of the Transitional Period*, which contained, alongside a series of correct and original theses, argumentation for “War Communism” as a policy

designed for the entire transitional period from capitalism to communism. “Proletarian compulsion in all its forms, beginning with executions and ending with obligations to labor,” he wrote, “represents — however paradoxical it may sound — a method for recovering a communist humanity from the human material of the capitalist epoch.”³ Outlining an entire “statification” of the economy, Bukharin declared that the categories of value, money, wages, and prices had already lost their meaning in the transitional period and were, moreover, unsuitable for socialist society. Bound up with this, in his opinion, political economy, which studied these categories, should also disappear under socialism. These propositions were met with sharp criticism from several party publicists, in particular, from M. Olminsky, who described the *Economics of the Transitional Period* as the replacement of Marxist political economy with a “Bukharinist system of incarceration and execution.”⁴

After the transition to the NEP, Bukharin abandoned these incorrect positions and changed his views sharply, defending the free market and the abolition of the monopoly on foreign trade.

Having finally taken the side of the triumvirate at the end of 1923, Bukharin made his contribution to the “literary discussion” with the article, “A New Revelation about the Soviet Economy, or How to Destroy the Worker-Peasant Alliance (On the Question of the Economic Foundations of Trotskyism).” In this article all attention was concentrated on criticizing Preobrazhensky, Bukharin’s recent co-author of *The ABC of Communism*, who was a major economic theoretician and, as an active member of the Opposition, independently worked out ideas that did not always coincide with Trotsky’s. Nonetheless Bukharin utilized the polemic with Preobrazhensky in his attempt to prove the theoretical bankruptcy of “Trotskyism.”

The immediate cause for the polemic was provided by a series of theoretical works by Preobrazhensky in which he outlined the possible paths of socioeconomic development following the victory of socialist revolutions in countries with a different level of economic development. In several ponderous formulations, Preobrazhensky expressed the following ideas: in the advanced capitalist countries the nationalization of

highly-developed industry and large-scale farming would create the basis for a rapid growth of accumulation at the expense of a surplus product from the socialized sector of the economy. By contrast, in economically backward countries with predominantly small-scale forms of production, the surplus product of nationalized industry would be insufficient for the processes of accumulation necessary for the rapid growth of the economy. Such countries would have to pass through a period of industrialization, in the course of which heavy industry would have to grow at a more rapid pace than light industry. Preobrazhensky described this as the period of activity of “the law of primary socialist accumulation” (by analogy with the Marxist conception of “primitive capitalist accumulation”). This law, in Preobrazhensky’s opinion, would operate alongside the law of value and would, to a certain degree, limit the latter and thus narrow the sphere of free market relations. During the period of “primary socialist accumulation,” through which Soviet Russia still had to pass, the State would have to carry out the “exploitation” of the peasant economy, by which Preobrazhensky understood the transfer of resources from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector through methods of unequal exchange of their products (the “scissors of prices” on industrial and agricultural goods).⁵

A correct understanding of Preobrazhensky’s conceptions was complicated by his complex and abstract forms of explanation and not always successful terminology (“exploitation,” “colonies”), which Bukharin did not fail to seize upon. Bukharin interpreted Preobrazhensky’s conceptions in such a way that it appeared as if Preobrazhensky acknowledged the existence in Soviet Russia of an exploiting class (the proletariat) and an exploited class (the class of petty private producers).⁶

For his other object of criticism Bukharin selected Preobrazhensky’s prognosis of how, in the course of the development of the Soviet economy, part of the small producers would unite

on the basis of some kind of new form of cooperative which would represent a special form of transition from small production to socialism without passing through capitalism and without the simple absorption of small production by

the state economy. This new form of cooperation under the dictatorship of the proletariat would still have to develop; one of its streams would clearly be the peasant communes and artels. Therefore we cannot offer a theoretical analysis of something which does not yet exist, but which must arise.⁷

Preobrazhensky's prognosis was rather cautious, presupposing a voluntary and gradual process of productive cooperation in the sphere of agriculture. Bukharin, however, considered the forms of marketing, supply, and credit cooperatives to be more vital than the industrial cooperatives. Declaring that "we will arrive at socialism ... through the processes of barter and exchange, and not directly through the process of production,"⁸ Bukharin contrasted the cooperative with other organizations engaged in agricultural production. However, in reference to this principal thesis he conceded that "only the basic process is indicated here; it stands to reason that both agricultural communes, artels, and other organizations of production will also play their own role."⁹

In his subsequent works Bukharin again fought primarily for the development of the simplest forms of cooperatives, through which the peasants would preserve their own independence as small producers. This idea would become the leading theory and practice of the new ruling faction between 1925 and 1927.

The next step in the development of Bukharin's ideas appeared in the statement, "On the New Economic Policy and Our Tasks" (April 1926), where he declared that Lenin had two strategic plans for NEP. The first, worked out in 1921, sought to overcome the petty-bourgeois element with the aid of foreign capital and cooperatives as the most important links of state capitalism. The second plan, of 1923, Bukharin interpreted in the spirit of a peaceful growth of capitalist elements, primarily kulaks, into socialism: through bank credits the state would render assistance to the kulak; and the kulak, as the depositor of state banks, in his turn would help the state. "In the end, perhaps even the grandchild of the kulak will thank us for treating him this way." Bukharin further declared that obstacles in the path toward capitalist accumulation were causing

dissatisfaction not only among the kulaks, but also among the village poor:

The prosperous peasant is unhappy that we are not allowing him to accumulate capital and hire labor; on the other hand, the village poor, who are suffering from overpopulation, in turn are growling at us sometimes because we do not allow them to hire themselves out to that very same prosperous peasant.¹⁰

The central idea in Bukharin's statement was summarized in the slogan: "In general and on the whole to all of the peasantry, to all its layers we need to say: enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your farms." In other works, Bukharin expressed himself still more clearly:

Our policy in the countryside should develop in such a way that the many limitations impeding the growth of the prosperous and kulak households are reduced, and even partially destroyed.¹¹

In response to these statements by Bukharin, Krupskaya wrote an article, "Did Ilyich really have two strategic plans, one in 1921 and another in 1923?" In this article, presented in *Pravda*, Krupskaya spoke out against Bukharin's assertion that Lenin's 1923 article "On Cooperation" proposed a principally new strategic plan as compared with the conception of NEP worked out in 1921. Krupskaya wrote that the cooperative policy, according to Lenin's thinking, was called upon to ease the peasantry's transition to large-scale production on the basis of the voluntary unification of small peasant farms. The article "On Cooperation," as she emphasized, was prompted by Lenin's fear that individual comrades, "carried away by the assistance to small production, will lose their perspective and inadvertently steer us in the direction of capitalism." Cooperatives developing out of the struggle against capitalist private ownership, Krupskaya explained in reference to Lenin's article, "will lead the country to the socialization of production without the colossal waste of human resources, lives, and natural riches, which accompanies the development of capitalism."¹²

Bukharin wrote an article in response. The Politburo forbade the publication of both articles "in the interests of party unity." Krupskaya

would only be able to express her objections on this issue at the Fourteenth Party Congress.

Taking a position aimed at weakening both contending sides, Stalin managed to compel Bukharin to acknowledge the incorrectness of the slogan “enrich yourselves.” Moreover, together with Molotov and Andreev, Stalin forwarded to the editorial board of *Komsomolskaya pravda* a letter in which he “called to order” the editorial board for publishing an article by Bukharin’s pupil Aleksei Stetsky, “The New Stage of the New Economic Policy,” promoting Bukharin’s slogan. Several days later, “with Bukharin’s full approval,” the Orgburo removed Aleksandr Slepko, another pupil of Bukharin’s, from the editorial board of *Komsomolskaya pravda* for publishing the article. Stalin used these facts at the Fourteenth Party Congress to prove that the Central Committee had rejected the slogan “enrich yourselves,” since this slogan “is not ours ... it gives rise to a whole series of doubts and misunderstandings”¹³ and might create the impression that the party was seeking to develop private accumulation.

1. Тринадцатый съезд Российской Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 209 [Thirteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), p. 209].

2. Большая советская энциклопедия, М., 1927, Т. 8, С. 271 [Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Moscow, 1927, Volume 8, p. 271].

3. Бухарин, Н. И., Проблемы теории и практики социализма, М., 1989, С. 168 [N. I. Bukharin, Problems of the Theory and Practice of Socialism, Moscow, 1989, p. 168].

4. Ольминский, М., «О книге т. Бухарина», в книге: Бухарин, Н. И., Избранные произведения, М., 1990, С. 213 [M. Olminsky, “On Comrade Bukharin’s Book” in: N. I. Bukharin, Selected Works, Moscow, 1990, p. 213].

5. См.: Преображенский, Е. А. & Н. И. Бухарин, Пути развития: дискуссии 20-х годов, Л., 1990, С. 104 [See: E. A. Preobrazhensky, & N. I. Bukharin, Paths of Development: Discussions of the 1920s, Lenizdat, 1990, p. 104].

6. Бухарин, Н. И., Избранные произведения, М., 1988, С. 90 [N. I. Bukharin, Selected Works, Moscow, 1988, p. 90].

7. Преображенский, Е. А. & Н. И. Бухарин, Пути развития: дискуссии 20-х годов, Л., 1990, С. 113 [Preobrazhensky & Bukharin, Paths of Development: Discussions of the 1920s, p. 113].

8. Бухарин, Н. И., Избранные произведения, М., 1988, С. 94 [Bukharin, Selected Works, p. 94].

9. Там же, С. 133–135 [Ibid., pp. 133–135].

- [10.](#) Там же, С. 136 [*Ibid.*, p. 136].
- [11.](#) *Правда*, 1925, № 92 [*Pravda*, 1925, № 92].
- [12.](#) *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, №10, С. 51–52 [*Questions of the History of the CPSU*, 1990, №10, pp. 51–52].
- [13.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 384 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 395].

34. A Shift in Policy

All these ideological and organizational maneuvers by Stalin did not hinder the actual implementation of Bukharin's views at the Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b), which took place from 27–29 April 1925. Rykov's speech "On Cooperatives," and the resolution based on it,¹ announced, in essence, a fundamentally new policy in the countryside which was secured in the resolutions of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets, where legislative changes were introduced. The following measures were accepted as basic elements of this policy: the lowering by 40 percent of the total sum of the agricultural tax; the introduction of additional state resources into the system of economic credit for the peasantry; the legalization of hired labor and renting out of land. In addition, the right to participate in various kinds of cooperatives was extended to all segments of the population involved in agriculture.

Having announced that these measures were required for the development of the productive forces in the countryside, Rykov admitted that this new shift in agriculture policy would inevitably lead to the growth of "*batrachestvo*," or hired farm labor, and the development of bourgeois relations in the countryside. He asserted that the division of the upper layers of the country into the kulak and "the prosperous, wealthy peasant" or the "industrious muzhik" was illegitimate, since it was impossible to draw such a boundary. Rykov united all the prosperous peasants by using the concept of a "bourgeois layer" and called for "acknowledging the inevitability, during the present resurgence of the economy, of a growth in bourgeois relations in the country." On this basis

he proposed to establish a clear political line with respect to the “bourgeois peasant layer,” which should “be constructed in a way analogous to the attitude toward private capital in the city, in the sphere of industry and trade. ... The mutual relations between the state and private capital develop on the basis of economic competition.”²

A polemic between Bukharin and Yuri Larin developed around this initial formulation of Rykov’s speech at the conference. They both noted that the new course announced at the conference indicated a transfer to the country of “NEP relations,” which up to that point had developed essentially in the city (in the form of private trade and industry). “I believe,” Bukharin said, “...that we are moving toward the development of NEP in the countryside, which before now had almost not occurred.”³ Larin said:

Comrade Rykov’s speech marks the most immense and important step that we have taken since 1921. Just as in 1921 we announced a New Economic Policy for the city, so now, in 1925, we are openly acknowledging for the first time the development of NEP relations in the countryside, in village production.⁴

None of the delegates at the conference disputed the statements by Bukharin and Larin. Thus, in the opinion of the representatives of all shades of party thought at that time, the real starting point for the development of NEP in the countryside should have been considered not 1921 or 1923, but 1925.

None of the conference delegates disputed the proposition, introduced in its resolution:

The differentiation in the country, which began with the shift toward the New Economic Policy, will find its new expression in the near future in the subsequent growth and strengthening for a certain time of the new peasant bourgeoisie, which is emerging from the prosperous layers of the peasantry, on the one hand, and the proletarianization of its poorer elements, on the other.⁵

The disagreements between Larin and Bukharin concerned above all the evaluation of the consequences of the sharp political shift noted by the conference. Larin noted the contradiction in Bukharin’s position,

who, foreseeing an intensification of the class struggle in the country, said: I'm not for it. "What does that indicate?" Larin asked.

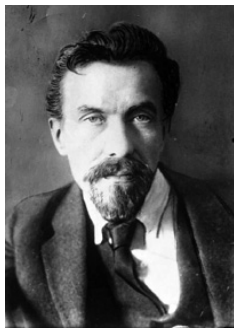
I say that, at the moment when we acknowledge an economic NEP in village production, it would be completely incorrect to conduct at the same time a line of softening the class struggle in the countryside.⁶

In affirmation of this thesis, Larin described how "elements in social harmony with us" in the villages were searching for support in the party against the bourgeois upper layers and against pressure from the kulak:

What can the rural correspondents write? Which rural correspondents are writing to us? Not those who write: what a happy event — the kulak has deceived the farm laborers, enslaved the poor peasants, etc. *Pravda* will not print correspondence in such a tone. Rather, we will hear from the correspondent who will say that the kulak is exploiting the workers, the neighboring peasants, etc., and that this is not good ... The kulaks cannot write with ink in such papers; they write with the blood of correspondents in the country. This is their means of "reviving social activity."⁷



Nikolai Bukharin
(1888-1938)



Aleksei Rykov
(1881-1938)



Yuri Larin
(1882-1932)

Larin also criticized Bukharin for "demanding from us the acknowledgment that we will never, not in fifteen nor in twenty years, confiscate and expropriate the kulaks, the semi-landlords, the bourgeois upper layers, who are beginning to emerge and are emerging in the countryside, who have four, five, or even ten or more hired workers. ... We cannot make such a pledge to these elements in the country any more

than we can make such a pledge to the private capitalist in the city. We allowed the manufacturer to own a factory, but both we and he understand well that, with time, a socialist order will emerge and we will confiscate his factory.”⁸

Larin’s positions were criticized by Rykov, who declared:

If we strive for the maximum rate of development of the productive forces in agriculture, implementing essential changes in the state of today’s countryside, and promise as we are doing so to requisition the wealth of the agricultural bourgeoisie in ten years, then ... no one will try to accumulate capital in the countryside.⁹

Bukharin made a similar argument, reproaching Larin for believing that the development of capitalism in the countryside might compel the party to call for a “second revolution.” At the same time, Bukharin made a theoretical prognosis in his speech which did not exclude such a perspective:

If the balance of class forces is upset, and this leads to a situation where the forces at the top grow stronger and they move against us; if we are suddenly faced with such a danger, then we will direct all the artillery batteries we have against them.¹⁰

An essential aspect of the discussion lay in Larin’s call for the creation in the country of socialist forms, including kolkhozy [collective farms]. “The kolkhoz is a powerful thing, but it is not the highroad to socialism,” Bukharin answered. He advanced a plan according to which each layer of the peasantry would develop in isolation from the others and embrace its “own” form of cooperative. The poor elements would unite in the production cooperative, the kolkhoz; the middle peasants would develop in the market sphere, in purchasing and credit; the kulak cooperative would likely find its niche in large credit organizations.

Generally speaking the situation will be such that, if the kulak grows into the common system, then it will be an element of state capitalism; if the poor and middle peasants develop, then that will be the very same socialist cooperative of which Vladimir Ilyich spoke.¹¹

Characterizing the mutual relations of various social layers of the peasantry, Bukharin offered a scholastic formula: “Even the farm laborer,

who works for the kulak and is exploited by him, while he is under the kulak, at the same time, as a member of the ruling class, he also, to a certain degree, stands above the kulak.”¹² Concretizing this formula in the brochure, “The Path to Socialism and the Worker-Peasant Alliance,” Bukharin wrote that “all the legislation in our country is directed against exploiters and every one of its paragraphs defends the interests of workers.”¹³ Similar formulas in the future would be widely used by Bukharin, and then by Stalin, to characterize the mutual relations between workers and economic directors, rank-and-file party members and apparatchiks, those being managed and their managers.

The obvious contradictions in Bukharin’s justification of a new political line in the countryside drew a number of different interpretations, both at the conference itself and in the discussion which proceeded over the next several months on the pages of the central press.

In his speech at the conference, Filipp Goloshchekin clearly highlighted two practical points that would have to be dealt with when implementing the new policy.

Every peasant poses to us the question: “You tell me that I must develop, but am I allowed to grow wealthy?” “You can,” we say. But then every village communist immediately asks: “To what extent is he allowed to grow wealthy? At what point will he be called a middle peasant, and when will he be considered a kulak or a member of the bourgeoisie?”¹⁴

Goloshchekin proposed to reject Rykov’s conception of a “bourgeois peasant layer,” since its use might hinder the development of market relations in the countryside.

*Peasants in the Russian countryside*

Kalinin, A. P. Smirnov, Kviring, and several other authors discussed this idea still more consistently in the press. None of them denied the presence in the countryside of kulaks who enslaved powerless peasant families. They claimed, however, that productive forces in the sphere of agriculture could not grow without social differentiation. Kalinin wrote that the differentiation in the countryside was not only an inevitable consequence of economic improvement, but also that it “strengthens productivity, raises commodity output in agriculture and, consequently, prepares the elements for collectivism, and — however paradoxical it may sound—clears the soil for a Soviet countryside.”¹⁵ In the same spirit Kalinin defended a policy for a “strong laboring peasantry,” a “diligent peasantry,” and a “cultured farmer,” who must be “helped in every way.”

Criticism of such positions during this period was expressed mainly by Larin; however, Larin was not the political figure whom Stalin decided

to attack in connection with the appearance of new political disagreements within the party. Only at the Fourteenth Congress [in 1925], where Larin united with the opponents in the “New Opposition,” Stalin limited himself to mild criticism “of his plan for a ‘second revolution’ against the dominant influence of the kulak, which we do not share, and which brings him near to Zinoviev and compels me to dissociate myself from him to some extent.”¹⁶

The views that Stalin defended publicly at that time corresponded fully with Bukharin’s conception. In his speech “On the Results of the Fourteenth Party Conference,” Stalin criticized “several comrades,” whom he did not name, for “drawing the conclusion, based upon the differentiation in the countryside, that the fundamental task of the party is to intensify the class struggle in the countryside. That is wrong. That is idle talk.”¹⁷

Without denying the “speculative machinations of the kulaks,” Stalin declared in June 1925 that the Soviet government could easily deal with them, that it could induce the kulak by economic means “to release onto the market all the old stores of grain at moderate prices.”¹⁸

Several months after Stalin’s declaration, the first “grain strike” broke out when well-to-do layers of the peasantry refused to sell their grain to the government at set prices. As a result, the plan to purchase grain failed. Between October and December 1925, the state collected less than half of the grain it had planned. This caused an interruption in the supply of export goods — and thus of imported goods as well. It also led to a significant reduction in the plans for capital construction.

1. The major part of this resolution was written by Bukharin, who stated this openly at the Fourteenth Congress (See: *XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (б)*. Стенографический отчет, М., 1926, С. 149 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (b)*. Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1926, p. 149]).

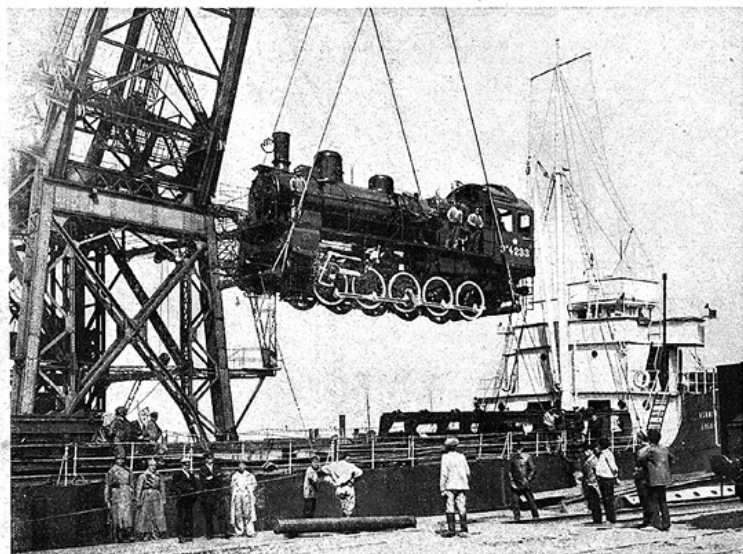
2. *Четырнадцатая конференция РКП(б)*. Стенографический отчет, М.-Л., 1925, С. 84–85 [*Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b)*. Stenographic Record, Moscow-Leningrad, pp. 84–85].

3. Там же, С. 182 [Ibid., p. 182].

4. Там же, С. 135 [Ibid., p. 135].

- [5.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 3, С. 368–369 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, pp. 368–369].
- [6.](#) Четырнадцатая конференция РКП(б). Стенографический отчет, М.-Л., 1925, С. 139 [*Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b)*, p. 139].
- [7.](#) Там же, С. 141 [*Ibid.*, p. 141].
- [8.](#) Там же, С. 141–143 [*Ibid.*, pp. 141–143].
- [9.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 188 [*Ibid.*, p. 188].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 187–188 [*Ibid.*, p. 187–188].
- [12.](#) Там же, С. 187 [*Ibid.*, p. 187].
- [13.](#) Бухарин, Н. И., *Избранные произведения*, М., 1988, С. 192 [N. I. Bukharin, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1988, p. 192].
- [14.](#) Четырнадцатая конференция РКП(б). Стенографический отчет, М.-Л., 1925, С. 109–110 [*Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b)*, Moscow-Leningrad, pp. 109–110].
- [15.](#) *Известия*, 1925, 22 марта [*Izvestiia*, 22 March 1925].
- [16.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 373 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 383].
- [17.](#) Там же, С. 123 [*Ibid.*, p. 125].
- [18.](#) Там же, С. 179 [*Ibid.*, p. 181].

В Петроградском порту.



Разгрузка механическим путем прибывших из за-границы паровозов.

Peasants ready implements for the harvest

В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ДЕРЕВНЕ.

Фиг. 8. Соловьев



Как показывают последние данные, в этом году мы можем ожидать, что почти повсеместно на территории современной Союзу Советов Республика урожай этого года будет, исключено, хорошим. Это в значительной мере зависит от благоприятного крестьянского урожая, но оправдывается во многих местах от послышавшей жуткой погоды. Уже во многих местах нашей Союзу крестьянство гонимое и сбором урожая. На самом деле — погрузка крестьянские сельскохозяйственные трудя для уборки урожая.

Unloading of locomotive imported from abroad

35. A New Split

A new split clearly revealed itself in October 1925, when Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov, and Krupskaya presented the CC with a document that reflected serious contradictions in the views of the newly emerging opposition grouping. The document, which later became known as the “Platform of the Four,” criticized the attempt by the CC majority to blur over the class struggle in the countryside. It also addressed the need to broaden inner-party democracy and strengthen collective leadership in the party. Moreover, it pointed out the “national limitedness” in posing the question of the victory of socialism in one country (a separate chapter will be devoted to this question). All these ideas objectively indicated that the views of the opposition were moving closer to those of Trotsky. At the same time, however, since the authors of the “Platform of the Four” were still within the grip of previous factional moods, they protested against activating Trotsky’s theoretical-ideological views and proposed that the harshest measures be taken against him, right up to expelling him from the party.

Stalin, as always, concentrated his attention not on ideas, but on maneuvers, which in this case he needed in order to weaken the role of his two recent allies in the triumvirate. He managed to block both the publication of the document and the opening of any discussion surrounding its main ideas. The “Platform of the Four” became known to the delegates of the Fourteenth Congress only at the Congress itself, where the Leningrad delegation began to circulate it.

Zinoviev later claimed partial responsibility for the fact that the differences that had long existed within the CC had fallen upon the party suddenly. For a long period of time, they had not been known to broad layers of the party, nor even to many CC members. This occurred because he and his co-thinkers, bound by factional discipline and bowing to the decisions of the “Seven,” had not submitted their differences to broad discussion. The CC Plenum of October 1925 marked the final collapse of the “Seven.” The political report of the CC was read not by Zinoviev, as at the two previous congresses, but by Stalin. The reports by Zinoviev and Kamenev, which were included in the Plenum’s agenda, were not approved as they usually were at plenums, but merely taken into consideration.

The sharpness of the struggle within the “CC faction” before this plenum can be seen in a letter sent by Dzerzhinsky to Stalin and Ordzhonikidze on 6 October. Dzerzhinsky wrote that the documents presented at a session of the “Seven” indicated “a conspiracy against the Party at the top of the Leningrad organization” and “a new Kronstadt inside our party.” In his opinion, the Zinovievists, who in previous discussions “had demanded the most draconian measures against Trotsky,” ... “had forced the Party to glorify themselves, and to absolve them of their entire past in order to dethrone ... Trotsky.” Dzerzhinsky recalled that he had often said to Zinoviev and Kamenev at meetings of the “Seven” and the Politburo:

You are claiming to be the official and sole heirs of the leader of the workers and peasants. Ambition is killing you ... You think that it is Stalin and Bukharin who are preventing you from being acknowledged.

Seeing the danger of “leader-worship” exclusively in the ambitious claims of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Dzerzhinsky felt that “the party is now grouping around those who provide the maximum guarantee of its unity and collective creativity.” Fearing that “Leninists, like spiders, will devour each other,” Dzerzhinsky stressed that he did not consider himself to be a politician capable of “finding a solution and proposing it”; therefore, no longer wishing to participate in a split, he was “leaving the faction.”¹

In spite of the October Plenum's prohibition of a pre-congress discussion, a prohibition which had been motivated by the absence of serious differences within the party, a sharp polemic between the Moscow and Leningrad party organizations arose several weeks before the congress. The tone of the polemic was set by the leadership in Moscow, which began to circulate, at party meetings, direct and indirect accusations against the Leningrad organization, led by Zinoviev, for its "capitulationism" and "defeatism" (for denying the possibility of a victory of socialism in a single country and for exaggerating the strength of the resistance by capitalist elements to socialist construction). Because these charges hardly made it into the press, the party first learned about the existence of these "defeatists" and "liquidators" only at the congress.

At a time when Stalin was completing his formation of a new high-level bloc, directed this time against Kamenev and Zinoviev, the latter found nothing better to do than put into circulation the charge that the CC majority, led by Stalin, consisted of "semi-Trotskyists." Believing seriously in the correctness of this maneuver, Zinoviev began to prepare the Leningrad organization that would be at the congress to repulse these "semi-Trotskyists" who ostensibly were not only failing to wage the necessary fight against Trotsky, but were even joining forces with him.

A declaration made at the Fourteenth Party Congress by the secretary of one of the regional committees in Leningrad demonstrates the striking blindness of Zinoviev and his closest allies:

The differences over Trotsky are the following: comrades Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krupskaya, and the entire Leningrad organization seek to bury Trotskyism once and for all. Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Bukharin, Kalinin, and others wish to make Trotsky not only a member of the CC (at the Fourteenth Congress – V. R.), but even want to add him once again to the Politburo. All of his speeches and articles are being printed without any explanatory notes; all of his various reports are published; his books and pamphlets are being circulated to the utmost — in short, all of this leniency toward Trotsky is allowing Trotskyism to live.²

At the Leningrad Gubernia Party Conference, which directly preceded the Fourteenth Party Congress, Zinoviev read out the points in the resolution by the Moscow Gubernia Party Conference about the newly

emerging “defeatist” and “capitulatory” tendencies in the party. Several times he repeated: “Who do you think they are shooting at here? At Trotsky? Nothing of the sort.”³ In the spirit of these statements, a declaration was passed at the Leningrad Conference:

At the Moscow Gubernia Party Conference, speeches were made saying that the Leningrad organization and its leadership lack confidence in the strength of the working class, are infected with whimpering, etc., etc. ... Up until now we have observed a hostile attitude toward our organization only from the enemies of Leninism, especially during the last two discussions with the Trotskyist Opposition.⁴

Moods of this kind, which were actively expressed in the Leningrad organization during preparations for the congress, gave Stalin grounds to depict himself once again as “peacemaker.” Despite being an elected member of the Presidium at the Leningrad Conference, Stalin did not travel to Leningrad but instead sent a letter to the conference which expressed concern for the “unity of Leninists”:

... Especially alarming, it seems to me, are the statements of several comrades in recent days at your conference that call for an open struggle at the Party Congress.⁵

Isolated, as before, within the Politburo and deprived of contact with the leaders of both emerging factions, Trotsky noted in his diary that the bureaucratic preparation of the congress made it very difficult to understand the real essence of the disagreements:

The muffled character of the struggle, confined so far to the upper echelons, imparts to its ideological reflections an extremely schematic, doctrinaire, and even scholastic character. Pressured by the unity of the apparatus, when party thought encounters new problems or dangers, it makes its way by circuitous means and becomes lost in abstractions, reminiscences, and innumerable citations.⁶

The apparatus-like character of preparations for the congress was reflected in the fact that, among the delegates, only thirty-four (5.1 percent) were workers, and only two (0.3 percent) were peasants. The remaining delegates were functionaries who had “something to lose” if they failed to agree with the congress majority. The short-sightedness of

Zinoviev and his supporters was expressed in their belief that, for their victory at the congress, they needed only the “monolithic unity” of the Leningrad delegation, which traditionally was considered the most advanced and, moreover, the least susceptible to “the influence of Trotskyism.” However, Zinoviev and Kamenev could not compete with Stalin in the art of manipulating the apparatus. At the congress, the “monolithic nature” of the Leningrad delegation collided with the “monolithic nature” of all the remaining delegations, which had been carefully selected by the Stalinist apparatus. As a result, the Leningrad delegation found itself in complete isolation at the congress, and its unanimous statement met with an equally unanimous negative reaction from the remaining part of the congress.

The only setback that Stalin suffered during preparations for the Fourteenth Congress was related to the behavior of Krupskaya. Understanding how great her moral authority in the party was, and knowing that she shared the views of the “Leningrad Opposition,” Stalin overcame his hostile attitude toward her and tried at length to convince her to come over to his side, promising to make her a member of the Politburo if she did. However, in response to this offer, Krupskaya declared that she could not alter her convictions.²

1. *Политический дневник. 1964–1970*, Амстердам, 1972, С. 238–241 [*Political Diary. 1964–1970*, Amsterdam, 1972, pp. 238–241].

2. Цит. по: Ярославский, Е., *Против оппозиции*, М., 1928, С. 190 [See: E. Yaroslavsky, *Against the Opposition*, Moscow, 1928, p. 190].

3. Там же, С. 191 [*Ibid.*, p. 191].

4. *Резолюция XXII Ленинградской губернской организации РКП(б)*, Л., 1925, С. 47 [*Resolution of the XXII Leningrad Gubernia Organization of the RKP(b)*, Leningrad, 1925, p. 47].

5. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 257–258 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, pp. 263–264].

6. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. I, С. 154 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 1, p. 154].

7. *Коммунист*, 1989, № 5, С. 105 [*Communist*, 1989, № 5, p. 105].

Leaders of the “New Opposition” 1925–1926



Grigory Zinoviev
(1883–1936)



Grigory Sokolnikov
(1888–1939)



Nadezhda Krupskaya
(1869–1939)



Lev Kamenev
(1883–1936)

36. The “New Opposition”

The Fourteenth Congress [from 18–31 December, 1925] was essentially the first and last party congress after the death of Lenin where the discussion centered on principled questions. However, this discussion took place in a strained and uneasy atmosphere, which had developed before the congress began. Khrushchev recounted in his memoirs:

I remember when we arrived at the Congress, the birds, as they say, were chirping about everything, and a rather loud voice was heard among the people, and even among the philistines, that a deep split had begun to show in the Party.

As during the discussion of 1923, the differences were reduced by the Politburo majority to a struggle between two “lines”: that of the CC and of the opposition which opposed it.

Stalin, Bukharin, and Rykov supported the CC’s line, that is, Stalin’s. That may be a simplification, but that’s what they said: this is the CC’s line and that is the opposition’s.¹

As they prepared to utilize the customary bogeyman of “factionalism” against the “New Opposition” (that’s what they had already begun to call Zinoviev’s group at the congress), the CC majority itself began to engage in intensive factional activity behind the scenes of the congress. In the name of the CC, Yakovlev appeared at a meeting of the Ukrainian delegation, led by Kaganovich. “This was a meeting to which we admitted no one other than the members of the Ukrainian delegation,” Khrushchev recalled.

Yakovlev described the issues where there were differences with the Zinovievists, and said that the problem was quite serious. Thus we were already somewhat prepared. In that sense, the meeting was a factional one, but it took place with Stalin's agreement and, I think, according to his directive.²

According to a resolution by the Thirteenth Party Congress, the subsequent party congress should have been held in Leningrad. At the end of 1925, however, the CC decided to open the congress in Moscow and then to hold only part of its sessions in Leningrad. Thus the Opposition still hoped that the Leningrad workers would be able to exert an influence on the congress. Yet during the opening of the congress, Rykov introduced on behalf of the CC a proposal — which was immediately passed — that all its work take place in Moscow.

The majority of the congress was unable, however, to turn down the proposal of the Leningrad delegation to present Zinoviev's joint report, since the proposal was signed by the minimum number of delegates as required by the Party Statute. Nevertheless, the proposal itself — to present a joint report alongside the CC political report — evoked an indignant reaction from the majority of delegates.

Zinoviev delivered his speech in a calm tone. He began by explaining the reasons for the Leningrad delegation's joint report:

If serious differences are kept inside, if we attempt to overcome them within a narrow circle for too long, then there may arise a situation similar to that which exists among us now. ... For the Party Congress, for the entire party, it would be better if the differences that have emerged within the basic core of Bolshevik-Leninists for nearly one and a half years, were to be presented in their proper form and in good time.”³

Kamenev also said that, at the October Plenum, the majority of the CC had banned the opening of a pre-congress discussion, and had forbidden the differences that existed in the CC to be broadly discussed by party organizations. As a result, the party learned of them only at the congress. This contradicted the traditions of the party, where “ideological debates are decided after the struggle, and not before it. That, in any case, is how it always has been.”⁴

The basic course of the congress discussion was aimed at problems of the party's policy in the countryside. Stalin seized the initiative by giving a speech which sharply shifted the emphasis in the decisions of the October Plenum of the CC. The resolution of the plenum had addressed the danger of distorting the policy outlined at the Fourteenth Conference "in two ways: in underestimating the negative aspects of the NEP and in failing to understand the meaning of the NEP as a necessary stage leading toward socialism."⁵ Moreover, the resolution noted that underestimating the negative aspects of NEP during "the inevitable intensification of the processes of social differentiation within the peasantry in the next period ... will cause the interests of the poor peasants to be forgotten and the kulak threat to be underestimated."⁶

At the congress, Stalin declared that the party should "concentrate its fire" on the deviation consisting in an overestimation of the kulak threat, in an "inflation" of the role of the kulak and, generally, of capitalist elements in the countryside. "This deviation is leading to an escalation of the class struggle in the countryside, to a return to the dekulakization policy of the Poor Peasants' Committees, ... to a declaration of civil war in our country."⁷ "How strange!" Stalin declared. "The NEP was introduced by people who knew that NEP is a revival of capitalism, a revival of the kulak, that the kulak would inevitably raise his head. And now, as soon as the kulak has appeared, we hear 'Help!' from those who have lost their heads."⁸ These anonymous hints in Stalin's speech were deciphered in a speech by Bukharin, who directly accused the "Leningrad Opposition" of desiring to undermine the NEP and revive conditions of "War Communism."

At the same time, Stalin, skillfully maneuvering as always, responded negatively to an article by Vladimir Bogushevsky, "On the Village Kulak, or On the Role of Tradition in Terminology," in which the viewpoint of those supporting the "diligent peasant" was carried to its logical conclusion. Bogushevsky asserted:

The kulak is a bugbear, a phantom of the old world. In any case, kulaks are not a social layer, nor even a group. They are merely a small number of

individuals who are dying out ... One may speak of kulaks as a social layer only if one considers any agricultural entrepreneur to be a kulak, or, by virtue of general inertia from the epoch of War Communism, if one considers any hard-working peasant to be a kulak.²

Stalin declared that Bogushevsky's article reflected "a deviation toward an underestimation of the kulak danger" which had been "condemned, as we know, by a decision of the party's Central Committee."¹⁰

At the beginning of the work of the congress, it may have appeared that the dispute between Zinoviev and his main opponent, Bukharin, concerned only individual nuances in understanding the meaning and significance of the NEP and in interpreting several of Lenin's statements. After all, Bukharin himself declared that "it is now advantageous to attack the CC through my humble person." He seemed to be in agreement with several of the Opposition's arguments, and emphasized in his speech: "I, sinner that I am, state and underscore in *every* speech that, in the next period, the class struggle will *intensify* in the countryside."¹¹

During the course of the congress, however, the atmosphere grew steadily more heated. By the time of Zinoviev's co-report, noise could often be heard in the hall and shouts resounded from the audience. At the beginning of the discussion, Pavel Postyshev declared that "our enemies could not have wished for anything better than that co-report,"¹² while Martemyan Riutin said that "what we have here is essentially a full-fledged faction."¹³ The discussion that unfolded at the sessions of the Congress, as Khrushchev recalled, "continued then in groups and individually, with personal squabbles during the recesses between sessions of the Congress, in the Georgievsky Hall and in the corridors. In a word, whenever two persons met, a discussion was underway if the two persons belonged to different camps."¹⁴ This struggle between different camps was so bitter that at the Congress, Khrushchev was forced to meet "not as a friend, but as an enemy" with his close comrade whom he respected highly. This "enemy" turned out to be the Communist Abramson, who had worked earlier with Khrushchev in Yuzovka. At the

time of the Congress, however, he headed one of the regional party committees in Leningrad and, like all Leningraders, belonged to the “Zinovievists.”

The aggressive tone adopted by the first speakers during the discussions demonstrated that, from the very beginning, the majority was carrying the discussion beyond the limits of what had been an acceptable comradely polemic at party congresses during Lenin’s lifetime. This alarmed Krupskaya, who called upon the delegates

... to work out the collective opinion of the party in some other way. The majority of comrades work in very different conditions and in very different fields of work. Therefore they perceive reality from several different points of view. They must somehow be given the chance to express these viewpoints. This is essential not only for individual party members, it is necessary for feeling out the party line.¹⁵

“Feeling out” the party line was especially important since the various opinions that existed in the party had not found reflection in the pre-congress discussion, as had always happened before; instead, the discussion “fell like snow on the head of the party two weeks before the congress.”¹⁶ Krupskaya called upon the Congress not to replace a principled discussion of urgent questions with squabbling, “not to conceal one or another of our views with the name of Leninism, but ...to examine this or that question according to the essence of the matter at hand.”¹⁷

Krupskaya received an opportunity only at the Congress to speak of the reasons why she considered Bukharin’s slogan, “enrich yourselves,” to be incorrect. She spoke of the alarm which many party officials experienced following the pronouncement of this slogan, because, in essence, it was addressed not to agricultural workers, not to the poor peasants, and not to the significant portion of middle peasants. Insofar as these layers think only about

how to make it until the next harvest, how to survive for some time, then turning to them with the slogan to “enrich yourselves” can only sound like mockery; and therefore, although comrade Bukharin wished to appeal to the

entire peasantry, his slogan was aimed essentially at the wealthy peasant and kulak.^{[18](#)}

Krupskaya then pointed out the practical consequences that followed the implementation of this slogan: in several regions the agricultural tax began to be levied in such a way that the wealthy peasants were able to pay less while the burden fell upon the poor peasants. Several party officials began to relax their defense of the rights of hired laborers and the poor peasants out of a desire not to offend the rich peasant and not to impede the development of productive forces in the countryside. As a result, the kulak “had grown insolent.”

The slogan “enrich yourselves,” Krupskaya explained, led to an incorrect and excessively broad interpretation of NEP:

Vladimir Ilyich defined the NEP as capitalist relations that we are allowing into our economic life under certain conditions. ... NEP is, in essence, capitalism which the proletarian state holds on a leash. Party comrades always understood the NEP in this way. But now, after comrade Bukharin's slogan, a new interpretation of the NEP has emerged. I am in complete agreement with those who say that the NEP must be extended to the countryside ... But we must extend to the countryside precisely the NEP, that is, those capitalist relations which are restricted by our legislation and our organization, and which are held on a leash. And when people among us interpret the extension of the NEP to the countryside in such a way that it becomes impossible to defend the interests of the farm laborer, then this is not the NEP, but capitalist relations limited by nothing.^{[19](#)}

Krupskaya reproached Bukharin for overestimating the socialist elements in an “NEP” society, for “moving NEP closer” to socialism.

After Krupskaya, Kamenev developed the ideas in Zinoviev's report. He stated that there were no tendencies in the party that would even dream of disrupting the NEP, of reestablishing the conditions of “War Communism,” of fomenting war in the countryside or dekulakization. The decisions of the Fourteenth Conference, in his words, had made an absolutely correct concession to the upper layers of the village, “a concession to the kulak elements of the countryside, which inevitably broadened their significance and their strength.”^{[20](#)}

It was precisely for this reason, however, that these decisions could not be interpreted in the spirit of the slogan “enrich yourselves,” that the party could not close its eyes to the development of capitalist relations, the growth of kulak elements in the countryside, and NEP elements in the city. Perceiving specifically that ideological tendency in the works of Bukharin, Kamenev said to Stalin:

You are a firm man, but you are not allowing the party to reject firmly that line which the party majority considers to be incorrect. I said to comrade Stalin: if the slogan “enrich yourselves” was able to circulate within the party for half a year, then who is guilty for this? Comrade Stalin is guilty. Now I see, comrades, that comrade Stalin was completely taken in by this incorrect political line (laughter), the creator and original spokesman for which is comrade Bukharin.²¹



The “Bukharin school” in 1926

Kamenev believed that the primary spokesman of the ideological tendency, which smoothed over the contradictions flowing from the capitalist seeds planted under NEP, was the so-called “Bukharin school.”

This “school” had begun to form around Bukharin at the Institute of Red Professors in 1921. Many of these young “red professors” occupied key posts in the most important party organs. The fate of this “school,” which consisted of roughly fifteen individuals, turned out to be highly dramatic. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, the leaders of the “Leningrad Opposition” declared that the “Bukharin school” had received a virtual monopoly as the “political-literary representative of the party,” since it held in its hands the entire party press and all the political-enlightenment work. They asserted that this “school” or movement was making more mistakes than Bukharin; was propagating incorrect views about the peaceful growing of the kulak into socialism; was contriving a third, neither socialist nor capitalist, path of development in the countryside; was glossing over the elements of capitalism contained within the NEP; and was presenting matters in such a way that the question of “who will defeat whom” had already been resolved.

As a counter-balance to this criticism, Molotov described the “Bukharin school” as “that group of young individuals which has begun to develop around our Party and our leading organs, which has been of great benefit to our Party, and which has done outstanding work in the central organs of our press.”²²

After the Fourteenth Congress, when the Bukharin school became the leading ideological force in the struggle against the Left Opposition, Yaroslavsky devoted a special article to it in which he asserted:

Comrade Bukharin has no *special* school; the Bukharin school is the *Leninist* school. The particular merit of comrade Bukharin is that he has truly raised, theoretically, in the spirit of Leninism, a large number of young comrades who are leading the propaganda, agitation, and literary work in our party.²³

Several years later, following the political and ideological dethroning of Bukharin, the same Molotov, Yaroslavsky, and other Stalinists would charge the “Bukharinist youth” with laying the theoretical foundation for the Right deviation. The “Bukharin school” would be characterized as “the agents of kulaks in the party” and, by the beginning of the 1930s, right after the “Trotskyists,” would fill the prisons and camps.

In their interpretation of the NEP and social differentiation in the countryside, the “New Opposition” posed a number of questions that were undoubtedly important for a correct evaluation of the perspectives of socialist construction, but that were in an insufficiently developed and worked-out form, to be sure.

Krupskaya emphasized the necessity of directing the increased level of activity of the working class toward “making our industry, once and for all, socialist.” She criticized Molotov and Bukharin for their thesis that the state apparatus was already a broad organization of the working class. Zinoviev argued that the relations that had taken shape within state enterprises could not yet be considered consistently socialist, since they still operated by means of hired labor, a sharp division between managers and managed, etc.

The primary argument advanced by Bukharin and other representatives of the majority against Zinoviev’s thesis rested on the idea that the workers’ enthusiasm for labor would weaken if they were told that state enterprises were not fully socialist. The ideologues of the ruling faction defended the thesis that the relations developing in the state enterprises were indeed consistently socialist; this position represented an important step toward Stalin’s thesis of constructing socialism in the USSR.

1. *Вопросы истории*, 1990, № 2, С. 88–89 [*Questions of History*, 1990, № 2, pp. 88–89].

2. Там же, С. 88 [*Ibid.*, p. 88].

3. XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1926, С. 97 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*. Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1926, p. 97].

4. Там же, С. 248 [*Ibid.*, p. 248].

5. КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 3, С. 414 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, p. 414].

6. Там же [*Ibid.*].

7. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 336 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 345].

8. Там же, С. 335 [*Ibid.*, p. 343–344].

9. *Большевик*, 1925, № 9–10, С. 63 [*Bolshevik*, 1925, № 9–10, p. 63].

10. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 335 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 343].

- [11.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, С. 151 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Stenographic Record*, p. 151].
- [12.](#) Там же, С. 157 [*Ibid.*, p. 157].
- [13.](#) Там же, С. 154 [*Ibid.*, p. 154].
- [14.](#) *Вопросы истории*, 1990, № 2, С. 90 [*Questions of History*, 1990, № 2, p. 90].
- [15.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, С. 158–159 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Stenographic Record*, pp. 158–159].
- [16.](#) Там же, С. 159 [*Ibid.*, p. 159].
- [17.](#) Там же, С. 166 [*Ibid.*, p. 166].
- [18.](#) Там же, С. 159–160 [*Ibid.*, p. 159–160].
- [19.](#) Там же, С. 160–161 [*Ibid.*, pp. 160–161].
- [20.](#) Там же, С. 255 [*Ibid.*, p. 255].
- [21.](#) Там же, С. 254 [*Ibid.*, p. 254].
- [22.](#) Там же, С. 472 [*Ibid.*, p. 472].
- [23.](#) Ярославский, Е., О школе молодых, *Правда*, 1927, 24 июля [E. Yaroslavsky, “On the School of the Young,” *Pravda*, 24 July 1927].



Delegates to the Fourteenth Congress: Serebriakov, Voronsky, unknown, Trotsky, unknown, Radek



Delegates: V. Smirnov, Preobrazhensky, Kalinin, Serebriakov

37. “That’s Where the Party Is United”

Still another source of disagreement within the party was tied to the issue of equality. Although it remained of secondary consideration at the Fourteenth Congress, the issue of equality would subsequently have an enormous influence on the outcome of the inner-party struggle. On the eve of the congress, Zinoviev published the pamphlet, *The Philosophy of the Epoch*, in which he emphasized that “the masses in our time genuinely dream of social equality.” Perceiving the aspiration toward equality to be “the key to understanding the philosophy of our epoch,” Zinoviev wrote:

In the name of what did the masses, under enemy crossfire, tormented by hunger and cold, follow Lenin’s banner during the first difficult years of Soviet power? ... Lenin led millions of workers not only with the idea of a struggle against the tsar or against the war, but above all with the idea of social equality.¹

However, the idea that the social meaning of the October Revolution and the struggle for socialism consisted in the movement toward equality was not at all acceptable for Stalin. When revealing in his closing speech the history of his differences with the “New Opposition,” Stalin reported that, when he had read *The Philosophy of the Epoch*, he responded to this work with “sharp and coarse criticism.” Declaring that “one cannot play around with words about equality, for it is like playing with fire,” he then read aloud his letter to Molotov, which said: “The slogan about equality is

Socialist-Revolutionary demagoguery. There can be no equality as long as classes exist and as long as skilled and unskilled labor exist (see Lenin's *State and Revolution*).”²

Stalin's ideas received their most extensive support in Bukharin's “The Path to Socialism and the Worker-Peasant Alliance,” which included a special section, “Economic Inequality and How to Overcome It.” On the question “regarding the inequality between the highest-level cadres of Soviet officials and leaders, on the one hand, and average worker, on the other,” Bukharin asserted that the work of the “highest-level cadres” ... “in itself demands a rather significant salary that guarantees an appropriate standard of living.” Moreover, Bukharin wrote, “were the most talented and capable” not singled out, and were there no privileges in salary, then

... the working class as a whole would not win, but lose. ... It is more advantageous for the working class to maintain its own upper echelon³ ... for in this way it will manage to raise the level of its productive forces in a much shorter period of time.⁴

Examining, in retrospect, the history of the inner-party struggle in his book *Stalin*, Trotsky wrote that *The Philosophy of the Epoch* became a bone of contention among the members of the ruling bureaucratic group. “Stalin's closely-knit fraternity” announced that Zinoviev's positions contradicted Marxism in a fundamental sense, since under a socialist order, according to the teaching of Marx and Lenin, there cannot be absolute equality. The principle “to each according to his labor” still rules. Zinoviev by no means was disputing, however, a differentiation in workers' salaries. He merely called for a decrease in the discrepancy between the salaries of different categories of workers. His qualified criticism was directed primarily against the privileged status and excesses of the bureaucracy. Trotsky wrote:

What, of course, neither Marx nor Lenin foresaw was that the bureaucracy would conceal its material interests behind the interests of the enterprising peasant and the skilled worker. The bureaucracy depicted matters as if the Left Opposition was encroaching upon higher salaries for skilled labor ... One must admit that this was a masterful maneuver. Here Stalin appealed to the

appetites of a very broad and ever more privileged layer of bureaucrats, who for the first time with complete clarity saw in him their acknowledged leader. Once again equality was proclaimed to be — monstrous as it may sound — a petty-bourgeois prejudice. It was declared that the Opposition was attacking Marxism, Lenin's testament, the salary of the more industrious and skilled worker, the humble earnings of the diligent peasant, Marxism, our dachas, our automobiles, our acquired rights. ... The other disagreements, problems, and questions of organization became secondary. Every bureaucrat knew what the struggle was over and drew behind him his entire office staff, for they all, despite the rigid hierarchy, rose above the masses.⁵

This circumstance explained to a large extent the rude and disloyal attitude of the majority at the congress toward all the speeches of the "New Opposition." In their speeches, the representatives of the majority indicated that the very delivery of speeches by the "New Opposition" at the congress represented a violation of party discipline. In response to such accusations, Kamenev said:

We are at a congress, there is a struggle of opinions underway, the moment is extraordinarily difficult, no resolutions have been reached yet, and therefore, during the moment of the struggle of opinions, at the moment when different viewpoints are being considered, to shout about discipline means to attempt to shut the mouth of one with whom you do not agree.⁶

Sensing that the absolute majority was on the side of the ruling faction, Bukharin made the unprecedented declaration that "no matter what decisions our party makes, we all, to a single man, ... will recognize the decisions of the party congress as the sole and final interpretation of the Leninist party line."⁷ Later, in response to Krupskaya's call for a collective search for "objective truth," Bukharin declared:

We cannot allow for such a "philosophy of democratism" from comrade Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, who claims that "truth corresponds to reality." ... *But where is the party?* Has it simply vanished from the picture?⁸

Bukharin's declaration represented another step toward the Stalinist conception of a unified and "monolithic" party, according to which any decisions of the highest organs of the party (and later, of its "leader," who would fully subordinate the organs to himself) were declared correct in the final instance, and the entire party and each of its members were

obliged to acknowledge the correctness of those decisions unconditionally.

When Krupskaya said that “the majority should not revel in its majority status, but rather search impartially for the correct decision,” a shout came from the audience: “Lev Davidovich, you have new comrades.”² Allusions to the similarity of the Leningraders’ present position to that of Trotsky was also heard during other speeches by representatives of the Leningrad delegation.

Zinoviev and his followers did not once resort in their speeches at the Congress to their favorite bogeyman of “Trotskyism.” Moreover, they were virtually forced to acknowledge that the questions they themselves raised about the abnormal state of the party essentially repeated the criticism coming from the “Trotskyists.” The representatives of the majority did not fail to call attention to this circumstance; they persistently reminded the Leningrad delegation that they were expressing views they themselves had recently spoken against in the discussions with the “Trotskyists.” Zinoviev’s attempt to express his indignation over the demand that his group cease to defend their views provoked an aggressive retort:

You think we will be silent in response to your attacks. This has never occurred in the history of our party. We have the right to respond (voices from the audience: “Trotsky was silent.” “What about Trotsky?” Ordzhonikidze: “That’s not for you to decide”). One cannot demand such silence from anyone.¹⁰

When, however, in his closing statement Zinoviev proposed, while holding onto his old positions on the question of factions, to include the representatives of all the former groupings in active party work, noise and exclamations erupted in the hall once again: “Who are you playing with?”¹¹

Lashevich found himself in an especially difficult situation. At the Thirteenth Party Conference he had ridiculed Preobrazhensky and other Oppositionists for claiming that “they did not wish to join a grouping, but the CC — all these Stalins, Zinovievs, Kamenevs — forced them to.”¹²

Now Lashevich was forced to all but repeat the ideas of the 1923 Opposition when he declared:

It is senseless for the party, the CC, and the Politburo to agree unanimously on all questions. Of course, different shades of opinion here are inevitable, and these shades of opinion, which are presented by a whole number of comrades, these opinions should be recognized. They should not be suppressed.

Lashevich attributed the suppression of freedom of opinion in the party and restriction of the rights of the minority to “an entire series of political machinations” that had “replaced collective leadership” in the CC over recent years. Finally, Lashevich acknowledged that Trotsky had “made not only incorrect statements, but also some correct ones” on a number of questions, including those concerning the apparatus.¹³

Leaders of the Opposition spoke of the need to reestablish inner-party democracy, collective leadership, a struggle of opinions in the party, and guaranteed rights for the minority. They emphasized that the power of the CC Secretariat, which had grown inordinately and essentially had risen above the Politburo, now posed a serious obstacle to the affirmation of democratic principles in party life. As a result, the free expression of opinions even within the CC and the Politburo was becoming impossible, and this problem in turn was becoming a source of factionalism in the leading organs of the party. If the Secretariat were in fact the executive organ of the Politburo and Orgburo, Sokolnikov argued, “then we would secure the truly free exchange of opinions within the Politburo ... and the formation of firmly consolidated groups in the Politburo and Central Committee would be excluded.”¹⁴

In Zinoviev’s joint report, the main culprit of the impending split in the central organs of the party was still not named, and the question of the necessity of collective leadership was posed in the most general form (as indicated above). The subsequent speeches of the Opposition leaders, however, and Zinoviev’s concluding statements raised the question of Stalin’s virtual suppression of the collective leadership. Sokolnikov protested, albeit fairly cautiously, against qualifying the very posing of the question of whether it was expedient to retain Stalin at the post of

General Secretary as “an attempt at an inner-party coup.”¹⁵ Kamenev explicitly indicated the party’s way out of the crisis generated by Stalin’s abuse of the immense power he had seized:

*We oppose the creation of the theory of a “single leader,” we oppose creating such a “leader.” We are against a situation where the Secretariat, essentially combining both policy and organization, stands above the political organ. We want our leadership at the top to be organized internally so that the Politburo, which combines all the representatives of our party, enjoys true authority; moreover, we want a Secretariat which is subordinate to the Politburo and which carries out all of its resolutions ... (Noise). ... Precisely because I have repeatedly stated this to comrade Stalin personally, precisely because I have repeatedly stated this to the group of comrade-Leninists, I am now repeating this at the Congress: I have come to the conclusion that comrade Stalin cannot fulfill the role of consolidator of the Bolshevik command.*¹⁶

Following these words by Kamenev, the heated atmosphere at the Congress reached its limit. Yevdokimov’s exclamations — “Long Live the Russian Communist party! Hoorah! Hoorah! Long live the CC of our party! Hoorah! The party is higher than everything!” — were drowned out by shouts from the audience: “Wrong!” “Nonsense!” “So that’s what it’s all about!” “They’ve showed their hand!” “We won’t give you the commanding heights!” “Stalin! Stalin! ... Long live comrade Stalin!!!” The majority of delegates rose up and, amidst shouts of “That’s where the party is united,” gave Stalin a standing ovation.¹⁷

In this heated atmosphere Voroshilov took the floor. For the first time in the history of the party, he called Stalin “the main member of the Politburo” and delivered a flattering panegyric in his honor. Having offered the Congress a nearly mystical explanation of Stalin’s special role, Voroshilov also unexpectedly blurted out the real source of Stalin’s strength:

Comrade Stalin, obviously, is already predestined by nature or by fate to formulate questions a bit more successfully than any other member of the Politburo (Laughter) ... In solving problems he takes the most active part and his proposals are passed more often than those of anyone else (Laughter, applause). ... Once again I ask : what is this all about? The fact is that comrade

Stalin ... holds in his hands the apparatus, and he can act with it, maneuver with it, move around, etc.¹⁸

After this episode, the congress majority responded to Krupskaya's speech with great hostility. During the discussion of the CCC's report, Krupskaya reminded the congress that Lenin, in his final works, including "the special notes that were familiar to those delegates from the previous party congress" (i.e., the "Testament" – V. R.), had emphasized the role of the Central Control Commission in preventing a split which might suddenly arise. Krupskaya reminded the delegates that the concentration of power in the executive-organizational organs of the party had increased after Lenin's death. She explained:

One of the questions which should be thought over by the Congress, is that according to the Party Statutes, we have an Orgburo and a Secretariat with enormous power, giving them the right to transfer persons and dismiss them from their work. This truly gives our Orgburo and our Secretariat immense power. I think that from now on, when points of the statute are to be discussed, we need to consider more seriously than we have done so far how to limit reasonably these transfers and dismissals, which often create in the party the impossibility of speaking out openly and frankly ... You know that in even in the period of the previous discussion, our ideological struggle degenerated into an organizational struggle. I think that the CCC should not have permitted this. ... The CCC has been created in order to preserve a definite independence and objectivity of thought in issues of preserving party unity. (Voices from the audience: "Independence from what?") Independence from the ability of an individual party member to influence its opinion. ... I think the CCC's business, for example, was to make sure that a polemic does not assume uncomradely forms. The CCC should make sure that the kind of mud-slinging we observe now does not appear in the press.

If all of this continues, Krupskaya said, "then all our good intentions about inner-party democracy will remain on paper."¹⁹

I believe that in Krupskaya's statements at the congress we are justified in seeing echoes of Lenin's thoughts — not only because Krupskaya was, as C. Zetkin observed, "Lenin's living conscience,"²⁰ his closest and most faithful ally, but also because she was the only person with whom Lenin could share his thoughts during the final year of his life.

Immediately after Krupskaya had spoken, CCC member Nikolai

Члены президиума ЦКК.



Sergei Ivanovich Gusev
(1874–1933)

Члены президиума ЦКК.



Nikolai Mikhailovich Yanson
(1882–1938)

Yanson declared: “Whenever some group of party members begins to attack the party’s Central Committee, it searches for some kind of special impartiality from the Central Control Commission.” In addition, he asked:

What kind of independence are we speaking of here? If we are speaking of the kind of independence which Nadezhda Konstantinovna (Krupskaya) exhibited in this matter herself, and which she recommends to us, then I would not recommend that the Central Control Commission utilize such methods in its work.^{[21](#)}

Subsequent speeches also displayed a tendency to depart from Lenin’s conception of the CCC’s role in preserving party unity. Thus, S. I. Gusev sharply countered Krupskaya’s transparent allusion to Lenin’s words regarding Stalin’s immense power:

The question is posed just as abstractly now as it was a year or two ago, when we first heard these words about “immense power.” ... We, members of the CCC, systematically attend meetings of the Politburo; we observe the work of the Politburo, the work of the Secretariat and, in particular, the work of the General Secretary of the CC. Did we see any abuse of this so-called “immense power”? No, we have not seen such abuse.^{[22](#)}

In his closing speech on the report of the Central Control Commission, its chairman Kuibyshev declared:

Comrade Krupskaya spoke about the great power held by the Secretariat; she spoke about the necessity of freely discussing those questions which trouble the party. All of this appears innocent, so to speak, in the tone in which Nadezhda Konstantinovna spoke.

However, as Kuibyshev later claimed, behind Krupskaya's words lay her unwillingness to admit that "the existing party leadership is one of the best in the history of our party," that Stalin himself was "the very person who has managed, together with the CC majority and with its support, to consolidate around himself all the best elements of the party and draw them into work."²³ Thus, for the first time, the Fourteenth Congress would already hear those familiar cult-like formulations which later were to be so grossly inflated by Stalin's propaganda machine.

During the consideration of the CCC report there arose a sharp discussion concerning the Opposition's allegations about the deterioration of party morals. Members of the Opposition considered a symptom of this trend to be their discovery that several Leningrad Communists had reported to the CC and CCC about their personal conversations with Oppositionists. Thus, a representative of the Leningrad Control Commission, Ivan Bakaev said:

I cannot regard with indifference those unhealthy morals which are attempting to take root in our party. I mean the habit of informing ... If this habit of informing assumes such forms or such a character that one friend cannot utter a sincere thought to another friend, then what does that resemble? ... Comrades, I am least of all prone to exaggerations, but I say here that such morals are intolerable in our party, that the party should reprimand those comrades who attempt to cultivate such morals.²⁴

Bakaev's words were disputed by CCC Presidium member M. Shkiriyatov, who declared that it was the "obligation of every party member" to inform the highest party organs about the desire of individual party members to create any kind of groupings.²⁵ S. Gusev went even further by describing Bakaev's speech as "a fit of philistine morality":

You're not being sincere, Bakaev, you're not being sincere, believe me ... I'm not proposing to introduce the Cheka in the party. We have a CCC and a CC, but I think that every member of the party should inform. If anything, we're suffering not from excessive informing but insufficient informing.²⁶

Statements of this kind provoked a sharp protest from Oppositionists. In her speech, Klavdia Nikolaeva demonstrated the utter bankruptcy of comparing party organs to the Cheka:

Comrades, what is a Chekist? A Chekist is a weapon that is directed against the enemy. ... Against our class enemy ... To inform on party comrades, to inform on those who exchange opinions in a comradely fashion with one or another comrade will merely demoralize our party, and it should not be the job of the Central Control Commission to call for such acts of informing and make such comparisons. Such a system in the party will cause damage, it will conceal sincere dissatisfaction and a series of perplexed questions that arise before every thinking Communist who thinks seriously about the phenomena which confront him in the difficult and complex situation we see today. We need not use such methods of struggle. We need to fight by correctly establishing a system of inner-party democracy.²⁷

Naturally, Nikolaeva's statement was greeted with laughter from the audience.

Before voting on the resolution concerning the CCC report, Sergei Minin read a declaration on behalf of the Leningrad delegation, which said, in part:

The system that has developed recently, in which denunciations are carried out by means of secret letters, private conversations, and personal reports, and when such methods are employed without any verification but are declared immediately to be trustworthy, while the identity of the authors of such reports and letters is promptly concealed — such a system cannot but foster the most unhealthy and hitherto unthinkable tendencies in the party. All of this, taken together, stands in direct and sharp contradiction both to the foundations of inner-party democracy and to the entire structure and character of our Bolshevik Leninist party.²⁸

Accompanied by applause and shouts of "Correct!," acting chair Petrovsky declared this statement to be irrelevant to the resolution on the CCC report and refused to submit it to a vote.

The Congress rejected other proposals and amendments of the



Ivan Petrovich Bakaev
(1887–1936)



Klavdia I. Nikolaeva
(1893–1944)

Opposition as well, including, for example, the proposal to open in the party's central press organ a weekly discussion page guaranteeing a genuinely democratic discussion of any contentious issues. Otherwise, they claimed, any discussion might degenerate into a settling of personal grudges.

In the discussion at the congress, leaders of the CC who had not long before been defending Zinoviev and Kamenev from criticism on Trotsky's part, did not fail to declare that their new "capitulationist" position was in fact a recurrence of their mistakes in October 1917. This device was first used in Bukharin's speech. Then, in his own concluding speech, Stalin defended Bukharin from "unbridled persecution" by the Opposition by declaring:

I know the mistakes of several comrades, for example, in October 1917. In comparison, Bukharin's mistake (i.e., his policy "enrich yourselves"– V. R.) is not even worthy of attention.²⁹

Some delegates, including even a few from among Stalin's closest allies in the CC, attempted to mitigate the sharpness of the polemic between

the “leaders.” Noteworthy in this respect was the speech by Ordzhonikidze, who declared:

If only our other leaders possessed the wonderful trait that Bukharin has. He not only is bold enough to express his thoughts, even when this runs counter to the entire party, he is bold enough to admit his mistakes openly when he becomes convinced of them; if only our other leaders possessed that wonderful quality, then it would be much easier for us to eliminate our questions under dispute.³⁰

Mikoyan expressed concern that the speeches of Zinoviev and Bukharin essentially led to “a mutual exposure of these leaders ... as they undress each other before the entire country and the entire world — why is this happening, who benefits from this? You think that we don’t know all about Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and the others? We know all this very well. Ilyich gave a fair assessment of each member of our ruling collective. But to discredit our leaders before the petty-bourgeois masses — what is the purpose?” Mikoyan expressed the hope that the rank-and-file members of the CC would be able to serve as “a barrel hoop, holding together the unity of the Leninist party ranks and its general staff, the Central Committee.” He stressed:

Our task, as rank-and-file members of the CC who do not aspire to be leaders, who know our role — as indicated by Ilyich — is to restrain the leaders from fighting amongst themselves. That happens. Ilyich said: your duty is to sit in the CC in the role — to put it crudely — of cops, and not allow the leaders to fight.^{31, 32}

Many of the speakers insisted that it was impermissible to allow the collective leadership that had formed to be destroyed. Endorsing the words of Kamenev, who warned against the creation of a “leader cult,” Tomsky said: “We have always fought against that; a system of one-man leaders cannot exist and will not exist — it will not.”³³

For the first time, Tomsky referred openly to Lenin’s letter on the necessity of preserving the unity of the old party guard. Speaking as if he was following Lenin’s thought, he rejected the idea that some kind of organizational measures with regard to Kamenev and Zinoviev might be the outcome of the congress.

What, are there so many of us? Have we gone out of our minds? Remove Kamenev and Zinoviev? Why? For what reason? What is this? Stop such conversations.³⁴

The Leningraders' fears that the Congress might conclude with repressive organizational moves against their leaders were rejected no less decisively by Andreev, as well:

We all value both comrade Kamenev and comrade Zinoviev rather highly. Comrade Lashevich was vainly trying to convince us that we are in favor of hounding to death comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev. We cannot even imagine comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev not being in the leading organ of the CC — the Politburo.³⁵

Rykov seemed to endorse this view. He asserted that “the common interest of the party consists in placing Stalin, Zinoviev, Rykov, Kamenev, and all of us into the same harness.” At the same time, his speech reflected the rancor toward the Opposition, Zinoviev, and Kamenev that had taken hold at the congress. They were accused of doing what they had not long before accused Trotsky of doing: they were seeking “to bring the party to its knees.” Rykov declared:

I would like for both the Opposition and all members of the party to be fully conscious that the party has never dropped to its knees — neither before Stalin, nor before Kamenev, nor before anyone else — and it will not do so. (Applause. Voices: “That’s right!” Voices directed toward the Leningrad delegation: “For shame!”)³⁶

This latest proposition, correct in and of itself, was given a different slant by Stalin, who transformed it in his concluding remarks into an unambiguous threat against the leaders of the Opposition. Before the ritualistic words regarding the necessity of preserving party unity and a collegial leadership, Stalin declared:

We oppose a policy of removing people. That does not mean that leaders will be allowed with impunity to put on airs and walk all over the party. No, I’m sorry. There will be no bowing before leaders. (Exclamations: “That’s right!” Applause). ... The party wants unity and it will achieve it *with* comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev, if they are willing, or *without them*, if they are unwilling. (Exclamations: “Correct!” Applause.)³⁷

Depicting himself as the champion of party unity, and his opponents as supporters of removing other party leaders from the leadership, Stalin twice charged Kamenev and Zinoviev with “demanding blood” — first Trotsky’s, and then Bukharin’s. “You want Bukharin’s blood? We won’t give you his blood, remember that.”³⁸ (Stalin removed this passage from the publication of his concluding speech at the Fourteenth Congress in the 1947 edition of his collected works).

Involved from beginning to end in a sharpening polemic which was assuming an ever more personal character, the congress was unable to devote any serious discussion to the basic problems of the party’s socioeconomic strategy.

In his report at the congress, Stalin said that agriculture “could move forward in seven-mile steps” at a time when the tempo of the development of industry, after the completion of its restoration, would be sharply reduced. When editing his speech for publication, however, Stalin replaced his thesis of “seven-mile steps” with a more moderate formulation, according to which “agriculture, unlike industry, can make rapid progress for a certain time even on its present technological basis.”³⁹

As before, the resolution of the congress condemned two “deviations” on the peasant question, including the deviation “which consists in underestimating the differentiation in the countryside, not seeing the dangers connected with the growth of kulak elements and various forms of capitalist exploitation, not wanting to understand the necessity of repulsing the kulak and limiting his exploitative aspirations.” But insofar as the resolution spoke of the “party’s relatively great preparation for a direct struggle against the kulak,” the second deviation, which “threatened to revive the policy of dekulakization,” was declared especially dangerous.⁴⁰

For many years in party literature, the Fourteenth Congress was called the “Congress of Industrialization.” In its resolutions, however, the idea of industrialization was advanced only in the most general, declarative form: questions regarding the sources of industrialization, the tempo of

industrial development, etc., were not examined in any detail whatsoever. Moreover, in the CC's political report Stalin opposed an increase in capital investment for the development of industry.⁴¹

After condemning the views of the "New Opposition," the congress nevertheless included five of its representatives in the CC, which in turn retained Zinoviev in the Politburo; Kamenev was demoted to candidate-member of the Politburo. Although Trotsky also remained in the Politburo that was elected after the Fourteenth Congress, Stalin nevertheless secured a solid and unconditional majority, since three new members were added (Molotov, Kalinin, and Voroshilov) who in the future would unreservedly support all of his most sinister acts. During the work of the congress itself, several CC members were sent to Leningrad to exert pressure on the lower party organizations that had fully supported their leaders before the congress. At "extraordinary conferences" immediately following the Congress, the Leningrad Gubernia Committee and all the bureaus of the party's regional committees, and of the Komsomol in Leningrad, were subjected to new elections. Stalin's loyal ally Kirov became the head of the Leningrad organization. Zinoviev and the former first secretary of the Leningrad Gubernia Committee, Grigory Yevdokimov, were recalled to Moscow, the latter ostensibly because he had been chosen secretary of the CC. By the beginning of 1926, however, Stalin and his closest allies were inspiring discussions in the upper ranks of the party on the need to reorganize the leading organs elected after the Fourteenth Congress, that is, to remove the leaders of the Opposition and replace them with "new cadres." The first step in this direction was the removal of Yevdokimov from the CC Secretariat at the April Plenum of the CC in 1926 and his replacement by the obedient Stalinist, Shvernik.

1. Зиновьев, Г., *Философия эпохи*, Л., 1925, С. 20–21 [G. Zinoviev, *Philosophy of the Epoch*, Leningrad, 1925, pp. 20–21].

2. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 375–376 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, pp. 385–386].

3. By this "upper echelon," Bukharin had in mind "the upper-level Soviet employees" and the "so-called senior officials in general."

- [4.](#) Бухарин, Н. И., *Избранные произведения*, 1988, С. 213–216 [N. I. Bukharin, *Selected Works*, 1988, pp. 213–216].
- [5.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 237–238 [Cf. *Stalin*, p. 564].
- [6.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 245 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, p. 245].
- [7.](#) Там же, С. 153 [*Ibid.*, p. 153].
- [8.](#) Там же, С. 856 [*Ibid.*, p. 856].
- [9.](#) Там же, С. 105–106 [*Ibid.*, pp. 105–106].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 463 [*Ibid.*, p. 463].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 467 [*Ibid.*, p. 467].
- [12.](#) Тринадцатая конференция российской коммунистической партии (большевиков), 1924, С. 137 [*Thirteenth Conference of the Russian Communist party (Bolsheviks)*, 1924, p. 137].
- [13.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 185, 181, 183 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, pp. 185, 181, 183].
- [14.](#) Там же, С. 335–336 [*Ibid.*, pp. 335–336].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 334 [*Ibid.*, p. 334].
- [16.](#) Там же, С. 274–275 [*Ibid.*, pp. 274–275].
- [17.](#) Там же, С. 275 [*Ibid.*, p. 275].
- [18.](#) Там же, С. 397–398 [*Ibid.*, pp. 397–398].
- [19.](#) Там же, С. 572–573 [*Ibid.*, pp. 572–573].
- [20.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 2, С. 203 [*Information of the CC of the CPSU*, 1989, № 2, “Clara Zetkin to N. K. Krupskaya,” 3 July 1925, p. 203].
- [21.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 575–576 [*Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, pp. 575–576].
- [22.](#) Там же, С. 601 [*Ibid.*, p. 601].
- [23.](#) Там же, С. 627–628 [*Ibid.*, pp. 627–628].
- [24.](#) Там же, С. 566 [*Ibid.*, p. 566].
- [25.](#) Там же, С. 570 [*Ibid.*, p. 570].
- [26.](#) Там же, С. 600–601 [*Ibid.*, pp. 600–601].
- [27.](#) Там же, С. 612–613 [*Ibid.*, pp. 612–613].
- [28.](#) Там же, С. 631 [*Ibid.*, p. 631].
- [29.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 7, С. 384 [Cf. *Stalin, Works*, Volume 7, p. 395].
- [30.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 223 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, p. 223].
- [31.](#) Там же, С. 187–188 [*Ibid.*, pp. 187–188].

[32.](#) This speech by Mikoyan reflected the position of many members of the Central Committee. In the last years of his life, Mikoyan recalled that members of the CC who worked in the provinces only guessed that a struggle was being waged inside the Politburo. Meanwhile, they felt that the CC would always be able to hold the situation in the party under control. Only gradually was it becoming clear that maintaining the balance in the leadership, as was done under Lenin, was becoming ever more difficult. But even then, according to Mikoyan, they didn't think about the "removal" of anyone from the leadership of the party. (Огонёк, 1987, № 50, С. 5 [Ogonek, 1987, № 50, p. 5]).

[33.](#) Там же, С. 289 [Ibid., p. 289].

[34.](#) Там же, С. 288 [Ibid., p. 288].

[35.](#) Там же, С. 298 [Ibid., p. 298].

[36.](#) Там же, С. 418 [Ibid., p. 418].

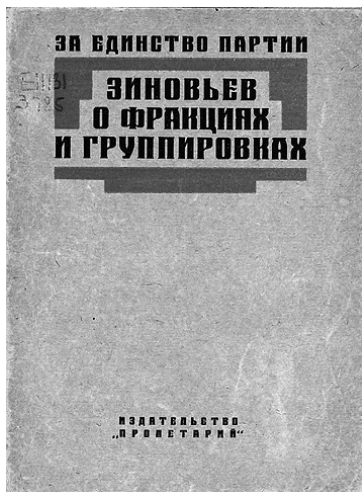
[37.](#) Там же, С. 508 [Ibid., p. 508; Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 401].

[38.](#) Там же, С. 504–505 [Ibid., pp. 504–505].

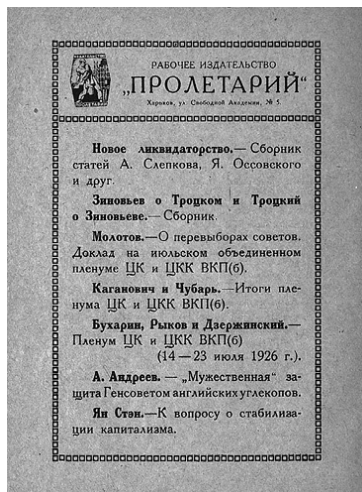
[39.](#) Там же, С. 36 [Ibid., p. 36; Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 7, p. 322].

[40.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 3, С. 431 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, p. 431].

[41.](#) This position of Stalin's was a reinforcement of his highly restrained statements of that time on questions of industrialization. Thus, not long before the congress, Stalin spoke out decisively against the proposal by Trotsky and Dzerzhinsky to develop the plan for building the Dnieprostroi dam (*Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1990, № 9, С. 185–186, 190 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1990, № 9, pp. 185–186, 190]).



For Party Unity. Zinoviev on Factions and Groupings, 1926. A booklet to discredit Zinoviev and his supporters as they considered uniting with the Left Opposition led by Trotsky.



Listed on back, an anthology entitled: Zinoviev on Trotsky and Trotskyism.

38. The “United Opposition”

Trotsky, who attended the [Fourteenth Party] Congress with a consultative vote, did not participate in the voting. During the entire work of the congress, he uttered only a single word. This was an interjection during Zinoviev’s concluding speech, virtually exposing the latter, and the other triumvirs with him, for their unprincipled behavior during the struggle against “Trotskyism.”¹

During the congress Trotsky continued to analyze carefully the political meaning — which had not been completely clear to him at the beginning — of the struggle between the factions. He reached the conclusion that the theses of the CC majority were so general that they also allowed for a correct, concrete interpretation. The course of the discussions at the congress, however, revealed the formlessness and inadequacy of these theses. “They should be supplemented, concretized, verified to a much greater extent, otherwise they will remain mere fragments of a pre-discussion period.”²

At the April Plenum of the Central Committee in 1926, Trotsky finally reached the conclusion that the victorious faction at the congress did not possess a precise understanding of the ways, methods, and tempo of industrialization, the necessity of which had been proclaimed in general terms at the congress. During the discussion of Rykov’s speech on economic construction at the plenum, Trotsky delivered what was essentially a joint report. He proposed to work out a program for the industrialization of the country and to replace annual plans with five-year plans. The CC majority rejected these proposals. Stalin declared that

“comrade Trotsky wants to whip up our central institutions with more extensive plans, with exaggerated plans for industrial construction.” As an alternative to the “exaggerated plans,” Stalin returned several times in his own speech to the idea of “the slowest possible tempo of industrial development which is necessary for the victory of socialist construction.”² Based on these conclusions, Stalin, Bukharin, and their allies accused Trotsky of “super-industrializationism,” “impatience,” “super-human leaps,” etc.

Kamenev and Zinoviev supported Trotsky’s proposals at the April Plenum. This was the “New Opposition’s” first step toward drawing closer to Trotsky and his group.

The Zinoviev group was drawn closer to the Left Opposition by how quickly the ruling faction was charging them with “factionalism” — that is, the same charge which the Zinovievists themselves had actively helped to devise during the preceding years. Already by the January Plenum of 1926, Ordzhonikidze had demanded that the “Leningrad opposition” renounce their ideas. This demand, which had almost become generally accepted in the party after the Thirteenth Congress, was somewhat softened by Dzerzhinsky, who nevertheless declared:

It is difficult to demand that Zinoviev himself issue a statement and proclaim: I am deviating in this or that direction, etc., as comrade Ordzhonikidze proposes. We may not need to demand that, but the party is strong enough to demand that you, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, must remain silent about this. You must do this if you wish to remain in its ranks.⁴

Thus Dzerzhinsky considered that the measure of violence permissible with regard to the opposition was to demand that they stop defending their views.

From that point on, Zinoviev and Kamenev began to fall into the gears of the apparatus which they had built against Trotsky. Trotsky later examined the reasons why the “New Opposition” had arisen and why it had then drawn close to the “Trotskyists”:

The Leningrad communists were protected from the Opposition of 1923 by the heavy lid of Zinoviev’s apparatus. But now (in 1925 – V. R.) it was their turn. The Leningrad workers were concerned about the trend favoring the

kulaks and the policy of socialism in one country. The class protest of the workers coincided with that of the exalted opposition [*Fronde*] of Zinoviev. Thus arose the New Opposition. ... To the great surprise of everyone, and above all to themselves, Zinoviev and Kamenev were compelled to repeat almost word for word the Opposition's criticism, and soon they were listed in the camp of the "Trotskyists." No wonder that in our circle, closer relations with Zinoviev and Kamenev seemed, at the very least, a paradox.⁵

The chasm which the Zinoviev group in the preceding period had dug between itself and the "Trotskyists" turned out to be so great that nearly half a year was required after the Fourteenth Congress before the unification of these groups occurred. They finally realized who represented the main threat to the party and the overall task of socialist construction.

Many former Oppositionists who were close to Trotsky openly opposed the bloc with the Zinovievists. Among them were even those — albeit not very many — who called for a bloc with Stalin against Kamenev and Zinoviev. They considered the latter, based upon their experience in the preceding inner-party struggle, to be the most fervent "anti-Trotskyists." Sergei Mrachkovsky, one of Trotsky's closest friends, spoke against a bloc with either faction, declaring that "Stalin will deceive us, and Zinoviev will run away."

Trotsky wrote:

But in the end, questions of this nature are decided not by psychological but by political considerations. Zinoviev and Kamenev openly admitted that the "Trotskyists" had been right in the struggle against them since 1923. They accepted the basic elements of our platform. It was impossible under such conditions not to form a bloc with them, especially since behind them stood thousands of Leningrad worker-revolutionaries.⁶

The final formation of the "United" or Left Opposition occurred at the following July Plenum of the CC and CCC in 1926. The opposition bloc united a significant part of the old party guard. Its ranks included seven out of twelve CC members elected at the Seventh Party Congress; ten out of eighteen members of the CC from the Eighth Congress; nine of sixteen members of the CC from the Ninth Congress (not including those who had died by 1926).

The “composition of forces,” however, turned out to be their real weakness. Stalin and his allies skillfully took advantage of the earlier internecine feuds between the two currents in the party that had just united. Constantly recalling the previous attacks of the Zinoviev group against Trotsky and “Trotskyism,” they successfully undermined the authority of both tendencies in the eyes of party members.

This process unfolded in a particularly active manner in Leningrad. At the Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, Kirov thus explained the departure from the Opposition of a significant part of the Leningrad party organization, which had whole-heartedly supported their leaders in 1925:

One fact which in its time helped this work is that Trotskyism was never smashed so thoroughly ... as in Leningrad, ... then suddenly and unexpectedly there occurred the famous fraternization between Zinoviev and Trotsky. This step seemed absolutely fantastic to the Leningrad organization.⁷

In his article, “A Response to the Inquiries of Comrades about the Opposition (September 1926),” Trotsky noted that the Stalinist faction was designing its policy of splitting the party by opposing “Trotskyism” to Leninism, and by claiming that the Leningrad Opposition had moved from opposition to Leninism to a position of “Trotskyism.” Meanwhile it was quite clear to any thinking party member that the goal of such agitation was the shifting of attention away from genuine disagreements. In explaining the reasons for the unification of the two opposition groups, Trotsky wrote:

Since 1923, the party has amassed enormous experience, and only those elements who automatically stumble into the petty-bourgeois swamp have not studied that experience. ... We united in defense of Leninism against its distorters on the unconditional acknowledgment of all the instructions that Lenin offered in his Testament regarding each of us; for the profound meaning of these instructions has been confirmed on the basis of experience as a whole, on the unconditional fulfillment of the Testament, the point of which consists not only in the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary, but in the preservation of the entire leading core formed under Lenin, and in preventing the degeneration of the party leadership from a Leninist one into a Stalinist one.⁸

One of the first actions of the United Opposition was to raise the question of publishing Lenin's "Testament." This question first arose after Stalin attempted to utilize Lenin's authority in the factional struggle to discredit the leaders of the "New Opposition." He was the instigator of a declaration made at the April 1926 Plenum of the CC by ten of its members (Kaganovich, Kirov, and others), demanding the distribution to CC members of Lenin's letter of 18 October 1917, in which he sharply criticized the positions of Zinoviev and Kamenev at the time. In response, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Krupskaya sent the Politburo a statement declaring the inadmissibility of circulating some of Lenin's documents while maintaining a ban on seeing others. They raised the question of Lenin's letters on the national question and the "Testament." Only the delegates to the Twelfth and Thirteenth Congresses were familiar with these documents, and even then only second hand. Krupskaya wrote that Lenin's unpublished documents must be circulated in full, "otherwise their circulation will assume a character that would have greatly upset Vladimir Ilyich." Here she raised in particular the question of the "Testament" and emphasized that recently she often

had to hear from old party members extremely tendentious distortions of V. I. Lenin's testament, which may have been the result of the hurried reading of the testament (at the Thirteenth Party Congress – V. R.) or for some other reason, I don't know. Considering what the party has experienced since the death of V. I., I think that it is absolutely necessary to publish the testament.²

At the July Plenum, Krupskaya's demand was supported by other leaders of the Opposition. Under pressure from these demands, Stalin was forced to read aloud the text of the "Testament," which was then included in a secret transcript intended for members in the upper layers of the party apparatus. The July Plenum voted to ask the Fifteenth Congress to annul the resolution of the Thirteenth Congress forbidding the publication of the "Letter to the Congress," and then to publish it in the "Leninskii sbornik" [*Lenin Miscellany*, a series of volumes which regularly featured Lenin's unpublished documents]. Thus, Stalin received the sanction to conceal the "Testament" from the Party, if only temporarily, until the Fifteenth Congress. This delay proved absolutely

essential for him during the period of the intensifying inner-party struggle. On behalf of thirteen members of the CC and CCC, Trotsky read aloud at the July Plenum a “Declaration,” which predicted “future measures the Stalin faction would undertake to replace the Leninist leadership with a Stalinist one. This program was achieved by the Stalinists over the course of the next few years with striking precision.”¹⁰

The “Declaration” emphasized that “the most immediate reason for the ever-sharpening crises within the party lay in the bureaucratism, which had grown monstrosly in the period after Lenin’s death and continues to grow.” In developing this thesis, the document indicated

... the obvious and indisputable consequence of a prevailing trend in which all talk is from the top down, while those at the bottom merely listen and think to themselves, separately and in secret. Those who are dissatisfied, who disagree, or who entertain doubts are afraid to raise their voice at party meetings. The party masses hear only the speech of the party bosses using one and the same script. Mutual ties and confidence in the leadership are weakening. Bureaucratic routine, and the indifference which invariably accompanies it, rules at party meetings. By the time of a vote, there often remains only an insignificant minority: the participants of the meeting hurry to leave in order to avoid being forced to vote for resolutions dictated beforehand. Each and every resolution is passed “unanimously.” Party members are afraid to express their innermost thoughts, desires, and demands openly.¹¹

The “Declaration of the Thirteen” also pointed out that Lenin’s idea of the CCC as an organ facilitating the struggle against bureaucratism and defending the right of communists to express their opinions freely had been grossly violated:

The Central Control Commission itself has become a purely administrative organ which assists other bureaucratic organs in applying pressure; it carries out the most punitive part of their work for them by persecuting any independent thought in the party, any voice of criticism, any openly expressed concern for the fate of the party, any critical observation about particular party leaders.¹²

In preparing for the July Plenum, Stalin decided to strike the first blow at the Zinovievists. On 25 June, he wrote to Molotov that the Zinoviev group “had become the inspiration in the opposition tendencies of all

that could lead to a split,” because it is “more familiar with our methods than any other group. For this reason, the Zinoviev group is now the most harmful, and a blow must be delivered at the plenum precisely against this group. It is better to beat Zinoviev and Trotsky ‘piecemeal.’”¹³



*Mikhail Lashevich
(1884–1928)*

The reason selected for such a blow was a meeting in the Moscow area of seventy communists from the Krasnopresnensky region, who had asked Lashevich to speak on the situation in the party. On 12 July, a week after that meeting, the CCC Presidium branded the meeting as an illegal “attempt to create a factional organization.” At the July Plenum, Stalin linked this “affair” with Zinoviev, who was expelled from the ranks of the Politburo for his “virtual leadership of the factional struggle by the Opposition.”¹⁴ Mikhail Lashevich was expelled from the CC (the first real application of Point 7 from the Tenth Party Congress resolution “On Party Unity”), removed from his post as Deputy Chair of the Revolutionary Military Council and forbidden for two years to carry out any official party work. In 1928,

Lashevich committed suicide.

In response to the charges of “factionalism,” the Opposition recalled the existence of the “Seven” for two years; they indicated that a similar faction at the top continued to exist even after the Fourteenth Congress. Secret factional meetings organized by the majority of the Central Committee had been taking place in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and

other major urban centers, despite the fact that the entire official apparatus was in the CC's hands. The Opposition's "Declaration" stated:

The claim that a "majority" cannot be a faction is clearly absurd. The interpretation and application of congress decisions should take place within the framework of normal party organs, and not by having all matters decided in advance by the ruling faction behind the scenes of the normal institutions. ... This system will inevitably narrow the leading upper echelons, will lower the authority of the leadership, and thereby compel the replacement of its ideological authority by means of pressure that is two or three times as great.¹⁵

Developing these points in a letter addressed to comrades in the Opposition, Trotsky wrote in September 1926 that the rout, elimination, and removal of the "United Opposition" would lead to the subsequent removal from leadership of the "more authoritative and influential representatives of the present ruling faction."¹⁶ Trotsky based his prediction on his belief that Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy were incapable of playing the role of unquestioning executors of Stalin's will, unlike willing individuals like Kaganovich, who had no significant revolutionary past or authority in the party. For this reason,

... the removal of the present Opposition would signify an inevitable, *de facto* transformation into an opposition made up of the remnants of the old group in the CC. A new discussion would follow, in which Kaganovich would denounce Rykov, Uglanov would expose Tomsy, and the Slepkovs, Stens, and company would dethrone Bukharin.¹⁷

This prognosis was confirmed for the most part in the next few years. Trotsky was mistaken only in failing to name correctly several of those who would denounce the next Opposition. As it turned out, Uglanov, Slepkov, Sten, and other supporters of Bukharin would share his fate, while young, one-hundred-percent Stalinists like Mekhlis, Pospelov, and Mitin would fill up the ranks of the denunciators.

The July Plenum elected Rudzutak to replace Zinoviev in the Politburo. The ranks of candidate-members of the Politburo were filled with loyal Stalinists: Andreev, Kaganovich, Kirov, Mikoyan, and Ordzhonikidze.

The July Plenum opened the bitter struggle, which was to last one and a half years more, between the Stalin-Bukharin faction and the United Opposition.

1. Here is the relevant passage from the transcript of the congress. Zinoviev: "We held the following view — if we accused Trotsky of Menshevism, if we spent several months saying that to the entire country, to the entire world ... then there could be no place for such a comrade in our party, at least during the present period. We felt that whoever says 'a,' must say 'b' (Trotsky, from his seat: 'Correct.'). Now I must say the following about comrade Kamenev and me. If you insist that there is no place for such people in the general staff of the party, you must send such people somewhere for a rest" (*Fourteenth Congress VKP(b)*). Stenogram, p. 456). Of course, Zinoviev at that time could not foresee, (nor could any other members of the party), that the campaign they had unleashed along with Stalin against "Trotskyism" and "factionalism" would logically conclude not by leading him to "a needed rest," but to a much more tragic finale.

2. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 1, М., 1990, С. 159 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 1, Moscow, 1990, p. 159].

3. *Наше отечество. Опыт политической истории*, М., 1991, Т. 2, С. 221-222 [*Our Fatherland. Attempt at a Political History*, Moscow, 1991, Volume 2, pp. 221-222].

4. *Коммунист*, 1989, № 8, С. 81 [*Communist*, 1989, № 8, p. 81].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, С. 494 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 521].

6. Там же, С. 495 [Ibid.].

7. XV съезд Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1962, С. 268 [*Fifteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*. Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1962, p. 268].

8. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 1, С. 268 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 1, p. 268].

9. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 2, С. 105-106 [*Questions of the History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 2, pp. 105-106].

10. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификации*, С. 132 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 99].

11. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 2, С. 11-12 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 2, pp. 11-12; Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*, Pathfinder Press, 1980, p. 76].

12. Там же, С. 12 [Ibid., p. 75].

13. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 124-125 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 7, "I. V. Stalin to V. M. Molotov," 25 June 1926, pp. 124-125].

14. *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях*, Т. 4, С. 52 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 4, p. 52].

[15.](#) Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. 2, С. 20, 22 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 2, pp. 20, 22; Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, pp. 87, 89].

[16.](#) Там же, С. 80 [Ibid., p. 80].

[17.](#) Там же [Ibid.].

39. Is The Victory of Socialism Possible in a Single Country?

One of the main theoretical aspects of this struggle was the discussion about the possibility of the victory of socialism “in one, separately taken country.”

In works of Western researchers, one can encounter the opinion that a tactical mistake was made by the Left Opposition when it allowed Stalin to draw it into this discussion, which supposedly had a “scholastic character.” At first glance, arguments of this kind may seem reasonable. Was it worthwhile to debate so bitterly what would seem to be an abstract question: what would occur first, the construction of socialism in the USSR, or the victory of socialist revolutions in the developed capitalist countries (major doubts about the inevitability of such revolutions were never expressed at that time by any of the defenders of “the theory of constructing socialism in one country”)? However, the future course of historical developments showed that the given discussion had important significance that was not only theoretical, but political. Victory of the Stalin faction in the debate had a significant negative impact on the entire course of the world revolutionary process.

For many long years, the position in this discussion held by Trotsky and his co-thinkers, who rejected the possibility of constructing socialism without the victory of the revolution in other countries, was interpreted by Stalin’s propaganda and historiography as the most terrible sin of “Trotskyism.” The “correctness” and “insightfulness” of Stalin was

meanwhile justified by the fact that socialism in the USSR had already achieved a “full victory” in the 1930s, when a triumphant socialist revolution had still not occurred in a single one of the capitalist countries.

Today, when the former republics of the USSR and the Eastern European countries, which had been called socialist, are backtracking to the restoration of capitalist relations, the discussion of the 1920s about the possibility of building socialism in one land emerges in a new light. A whole cohort of publicists calling themselves “democrats” are now “rewriting” all of post-October history in order to “prove” that bringing to life Marx’s idea of socialism, and developing the revolutionary practice of Bolshevism, could have led to nothing other than Stalinism. Following the lead of Stalinist propaganda, they assert that socialism was indeed built in the USSR, and they add that only this kind of “socialism” could have been built as a result of the consistent realization of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

The best refutation of this latest historical myth is an analysis of the alternative to Stalinism advanced by the Left Opposition in the 1920s and, especially, in the 1930s. This analysis is completely ignored by contemporary anti-communists. This conception of socialism, an alternative to Stalinism, developed the ideas of Marx and Lenin based on the experience of the successes and defeats of socialist construction in the USSR. It included the following dynamic characteristics: the achievement of a higher productivity of labor than in the leading capitalist countries; a steady movement toward social equality, i.e., toward equality of the social and material status of all layers of the population; the withering away of the state, i.e., the consistent replacement of state compulsion with the voluntary social self-regulation of those who labor; the liquidation of traces of all hegemonism and the inequality of rights between nations.¹

Like Trotsky, more serious researchers consider that socialism was not built in the USSR. They see the causes for this, not in the isolation of the Soviet Union (from the end of the 1940s, other countries, with varying levels of economic development took the road of socialist construction), but in the substitution of socialist principles by Stalinist ones and the

imposition of the latter on other countries that had chosen a socialist orientation. At first glance, historical experience refuted several other fundamental propositions advanced by Trotsky in the discussion. What we have in mind is the unquestionable circumstance that the leading capitalist countries after the Second World War were able to achieve a new dynamic equilibrium and enter into a new period of ascendancy. As Trotsky thought in the 1920s, such a development of events would signify that capitalism “on a European and worldwide scale has still not exhausted its historical mission, that it is not an imperialist and decaying capitalism, but a developing capitalism, leading the economy and culture forward.”² Insofar as Trotsky, who was proceeding from an analysis of the tendencies of the development of capitalism in the 1920s, assumed that there were no historical chances for a new and prolonged ascendancy of capitalism, then it would seem it would be necessary to conclude that Trotsky’s position on this question was wrong. However, answers that lie on the surface do not always prove to be correct. Let us try to investigate this question more concretely.

So then, was Trotsky mistaken in his assessment of the perspective of the world revolutionary process and socialist construction? For a more thorough review of this question, let us examine, first of all, how the discussion of the possible victory of socialism in one country arose and developed. Second, what were the arguments of both sides in this discussion; and, third, how do these arguments look in light of subsequent historical experience? Until the end of 1924, no one in the party had raised the question of being able to build socialism in “one, separately taken country,” and, speaking concretely, in the USSR . The view that the victory of the socialist revolution in several advanced capitalist countries was the necessary condition for the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union was shared by all party theoreticians and ideologists, including Stalin.

In May 1924, Stalin wrote in a pamphlet “On the Foundations of Leninism”:

To overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and establish the power of the proletariat in one country still does not mean to guarantee the complete

victory of socialism. The main task of socialism — the organization of socialist production — still lies ahead. Can this task be fulfilled, can the final victory of socialism be achieved in one country, without the joint efforts of the proletarians in several advanced countries? No, it cannot. ... For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist construction, the efforts of one country, particularly of a peasant country like Russia, are insufficient; for that, the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are necessary.³

A few months later, in December 1924, in one of the first works devoted to a criticism of “Trotskyism” — the article, “The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists” — Stalin changed this formulation into its direct opposite. From that time on, he began to accuse those who denied the possibility of building socialism in the USSR, in the absence of victorious socialist revolutions in other countries, of capitulationism and defeatism.

The new theoretical and political attitude toward the construction of socialism in one country was elaborated at the Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b) in April 1925, when none other than Kamenev concluded with the words:

With a correct policy to strengthen the socialist elements in our economy, we will demonstrate that, given the slow tempo of world revolution, socialism must be built, can be built, and, in an alliance with the peasantry of our country, it will be built and brought to completion.⁴

In the conference resolution “On the Tasks of the Comintern and the RKP(b) in Connection with the Expanded Plenum of the ECCI,” which was adopted on the basis of Zinoviev’s report, the given thesis was formulated with even greater specificity. It contained sharp criticism of the idea about the impossibility of constructing “a fully socialist society in a country as backward as Russia, without ‘state assistance’ (Trotsky) from countries more developed in a technical and economic sense.” In contrast to this idea, it declared that the party “must devote all efforts to building socialist society with the certainty that this construction can be and surely will be victorious.”⁵

However, already by the Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b), the “New Opposition,” led by Kamenev and Zinoviev, were criticizing the

thesis of the possible victory of socialism in the USSR as an expression of “national narrow-mindedness.” This position prompted the development of a discussion of the given question both at the congress itself, as well as after it had ended.

The main theoreticians of the victory of socialism in one country were Stalin and Bukharin. The first devoted a chapter to this theme in the pamphlet “On Questions of Leninism,” and the second wrote an expansive article “On the Character of Our Revolution and On the Possibility of Triumphant Socialist Construction in the USSR” (both works were written in 1926). After writing these works, they varied this theme in every way in their many speeches and reports.

Stalin and Bukharin “divided” the question of the victory of socialism into two parts — the question of the final victory of socialism in the USSR as a full guarantee against the restoration of capitalist relations (which, in their opinion, could not be achieved without the victory of the socialist revolution in other countries); and the question of the complete victory of socialism, which, as they declared, could be achieved without this condition being met.

To justify their thesis about the possibility of the complete victory of socialism in the USSR, they resorted to a false interpretation of two citations, torn out of context, from Lenin’s works written in 1915 and 1923, while ignoring dozens of other statements by Lenin which directly contradicted this thesis. With the same single-mindedness, they cited several excerpts from Trotsky’s works of various years, where he spoke of the impossibility of the victory of socialism in one country. By juxtaposing the citations from Lenin and Trotsky, they built up the conception that Leninism and “Trotskyism” are fundamentally opposed to each other.

Insofar as this conception was made the basis of the criticism of “Trotskyism,” at the Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b) in November 1926, Trotsky was compelled to give a detailed explanation of this question. He directed attention first of all to the fact that the draft of the conference resolution cited his works written before 1922; Stalin, however, still supported the “Trotskyist” idea about the impossibility of

the victory of socialism in one country as late as 1924. After declaring that Stalin had changed this point of view, something that he, of course, had the right to do, Trotsky then pointed to Stalin's dishonest maneuver in presenting the change of his views as a simple modification, an adjustment of the formulation. Stalin assured the conference that the shortcoming of his earlier formulation consisted in the fact that he supposedly joined two different questions together into one: "the full guarantee against the restoration of bourgeois relations and ... the possibility of constructing a complete socialist society in one country."⁶

"Excuse me," Trotsky said in response to this claim, "in the first citation (from 1924) these two questions are by no means confused; the point being made there is not about intervention, but the text is absolutely clear in stating the impossibility of the complete organization of socialist production simply by the forces of one peasant country such as Russia."⁷

Later on, Trotsky analyzed the basic propositions of Bukharin's article mentioned above. As he did so, his sarcastic analysis did not fail to produce laughter at Bukharin's expense, even among the conference delegates who were inclined against Trotsky. Having called the article "the most scholastic production of Bukharin's pen," Trotsky substantiated his assertion by focusing most attention on its basic proposition: "The debate is about whether we will be able to build socialism, and complete its construction, if we abstract ourselves from international factors, i.e., the debate is about the character of our revolution."⁸

"Listen: 'will we be able to construct socialism in our country if we 'abstract' ourselves from international factors,'" Trotsky declared. "If we 'abstract ourselves,' then we can. But we cannot abstract ourselves! That's the whole trick. (Laughter). You can walk around naked in Moscow in January if you 'abstract yourself' from the weather and the police (Laughter). But I fear that neither the weather, nor the police, will abstract themselves from you, if you perform this experiment." (Laughter).⁹

Trotsky continued:

The character of our revolution, independent of international conditions — when will it begin, this self-sufficient character? The entire approach is metaphysical. We cannot abstract ourselves from the world economy. What is export? Is it a domestic or foreign matter? Internally, we must gather a product for export — it seems it is a domestic matter, but we must export it abroad — it now seems that it is an international matter. (Laughter). And what then is import? Import seems to be international — we must buy the commodity abroad, but we must bring it into the country, so it seems to be a domestic matter. (Laughter). So then, with import and export, comrade Bukharin's entire theory, proposing that we “abstract” from the international situation, immediately bursts at the seams. The success of socialist construction depends on tempo, and the tempo of our economic development now most immediately and acutely of all is determined by the import of raw materials and equipment. Of course, we can “abstract” from our shortage of foreign currency and order a great quantity of cotton and machinery, but this can be done only once; we cannot repeat this “abstraction” a second time. (Laughter). Our entire construction is internationally determined.^{[10](#)}

In showing the illegitimacy of reducing the international conditions of socialist construction in the USSR solely to the danger of intervention by the capitalist states, Trotsky noted:

Could it indeed be true, comrades, that the question comes down to intervention? For, after all, we cannot imagine things in such a way that we are building socialism in this house, and enemies from without can smash our windows. The question is not so simple ... The question concerns the economic relations between the USSR and the capitalist countries on a full scale. These mutual relations are by no means exhausted by the exclusive form that is called intervention. They have a much more uninterrupted and global character.^{[11](#)}

Besides military intervention, Trotsky showed, there is the intervention of cheap prices for commodities produced abroad. Therefore, in the near future, the task consisted in drawing the prices and norms of per capita consumption in the Soviet Union closer to the prices and norms of leading capitalist countries, and in not allowing any further lagging behind the latter in these decisive economic indicators.

Following Marx and Lenin, Trotsky proceeded from the fact that triumphant socialism presupposes most of all a higher level of development of the productive forces than in the advanced capitalist

countries. The achievement of this goal by the Soviet Union in isolation was impossible, insofar as the Soviet economy could develop in no other way than in the most intimate interconnection with the development of the world market, and the world economy “in the last instance ... controls every one of its parts, even if this part exists under a proletarian dictatorship and is building a socialist economy.”¹²

Of course, all this did not mean that Trotsky, as Stalinist and post-Stalinist propaganda insisted for many long years, spoke out against a course of building socialism in the USSR. On the contrary, all of his practical proposals were aimed at moving this construction forward with the greatest possible energy and consistency. “We are talking, of course, not about whether we can or should build socialism in the USSR,” he said, while explaining his position in the discussion. “Our work on the construction of socialism is just as much a component part of the world revolutionary struggle as the organization of the miners’ strike in England or the building of factory cells in Germany.”¹³ Every success of economic development in the USSR is a step along the long bridge joining capitalism with socialism. By demonstrating the possibility of socialism in developing the economy and raising the living standards of the people, these successes facilitate the approach of the revolution in other countries. From these positions, Trotsky criticized Bukharin’s thesis that “we will plod along at the pace of a tortoise, but nevertheless we are building socialism and we will bring it to completion.”¹⁴ “At the pace of a tortoise,” Trotsky said, “we will never build socialism, for the world market controls us nonetheless.”¹⁵ Trotsky considered an effective way of accelerating economic development in the USSR to be the active inclusion of the Soviet Union in the international division of labor, a broader use of foreign credits, the import of machinery and technical knowledge (of specialists). Recalling that, before the revolution, two-thirds of the technological equipment was brought into the USSR from abroad, he felt that the same ratio must be sought as socialist industrialization was proceeding.

Trotsky spoke against “underestimating” the criteria for building socialism contained in the works of Bukharin, who stated that “our socialism, as it grows, and until it has achieved full maturity, will to a certain extent have its own special features; I would say, if one can put it this way, that it will be a backward socialism for a prolonged period of its development. ... But nevertheless it will be socialism ...”¹⁶ This rhetorical formulation left a broad expanse for interpretation: what kind of “nevertheless socialism,” albeit “backward,” would be built in the USSR?

In contrast to such scholastic assertions, Trotsky focused attention on how far the USSR lagged behind, and would continue to lag behind, genuine socialism for a prolonged period. Speaking of what can be called a socialist economy in the true sense of the word, he noted:

Comrade Rykov's theses state that we have approached the pre-war level. But this is not precise. Is our population the same? No. It is greater! And the average per capita consumption of industrial commodities? It is significantly lower than in 1913. ... And what is the level of 1913? It is a level of poverty, backwardness, and barbarism. When we speak of socialist economy and about a genuine uplifting of socialist economy, this means: the contradiction between town and country should no longer exist; it means general satisfaction, prosperity, and culture. ... We may be proud of the successes we have achieved, but we cannot demolish our historical perspective. This is not yet the genuine rise of a genuinely socialist economy, it is only the first few serious steps along that long bridge which connects capitalism with socialism.¹⁷

Rejecting such a realistic approach to the perspectives of socialist construction in the USSR, and reducing the discussion to the juggling of citations and searching for differences in the nuances of one or another formulation, Stalin and Bukharin virtually removed from discussion a much more important question: the criteria for the victory of “complete” socialism. This decisive question was never investigated in any detail in the inner-party discussions, which made it easier ten years later for Stalin, when not a single one of his utterances could be met in the party with public objection, to advance one more theoretical and political “innovation.” In December 1936, that is, all of four years after mass starvation, at a time when the living standards of the broad masses of

workers was bordering on poverty, and the country was facing a wave of ruthless and senseless repressive measures, Stalin announced that socialism had already been built in the USSR. Thus came to completion one of the greatest ideological falsifications, a falsification that took advantage not just of individuals' faith in Stalin, but the faith of the entire working class and Soviet people.

As Raskolnikov wrote in 1939 in a letter to Stalin:

With self-sacrificing heroism, the working class bore the burden of strained labor and malnutrition, famine, miserly wages, crowded living space, and a shortage of necessary goods. They believed that you would lead them to socialism, but you betrayed their trust. They hoped that, with the victory of socialism in our land, when the dream of humanity's best minds about the great brotherhood of peoples had come true, everyone would live joyfully and easily. You have taken away even this dream: you have declared that socialism has been completely built. And the bewildered workers ask one another in a whisper: "If this is socialism, then what have we been fighting for, comrades?"¹⁸

Of course, in 1926 Trotsky could not have foreseen all the tragic events of the following decade. However, even then he was uncovering the true political reason behind the "theory" of the possible victory of socialism in one country. This hidden motive consisted in the striving of the party and state bureaucracy to defend their dominant position, and with this goal, "to attach the label of socialism in advance to everything that was happening and would happen within the Soviet Union, independent of what was happening outside its borders."¹⁹

A similar purpose of this ideological manipulation lay in turning the international communist movement into a submissive instrument in the hands of the ruling higher-ups in the VKP(b). In the first years of the Comintern's existence, Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly stressed the priority of the interests of the international revolutionary struggle over the interests of the Russian Revolution. At the Third Congress of the Comintern, Trotsky said:

It is completely absurd to think that we consider this Russian pillar of revolution to be the center of the world, as if we have the right to demand from you revolutions in Germany, France, and Italy, when our internal

politics require this. If we were capable of such treachery, it would be necessary to line us up against the wall and shoot us one by one.²⁰

In opposition to such an approach, the Stalin-Bukharin theory of the victory of socialism in one country led to declaring the USSR to be the center of the revolutionary movement of the entire world. The main criterion of proletarian internationalism began to be seen as a positive attitude toward everything that was taking place in the USSR, toward all the zigzags of the political line of the leadership of the VKP(b). The logical continuation of such an orientation was the position that the Soviet Union was the genuine fatherland of the proletariat and the communists of all lands. The practical realization of this thesis was the subordination of the interests of the developing world revolutionary process and the interests of the working class of other countries to the state interests of the USSR, in the form that Stalin understood them.²¹ The democratic relations between Communist Parties were destroyed, and the Comintern began to be viewed as an external factor guaranteeing favorable conditions for the development of the Soviet Union.

All this enabled a weakening of the world revolutionary movement and the survival of capitalism in the period of its most acute structural crisis in the 1930s and 1940s. Only by taking these circumstances into account can one correctly evaluate the fate of Trotsky's multifaceted prognosis elaborated in the discussion about the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country.

1. The basic ideas of these alternative conceptions are analyzed in greater detail in the following articles by Vadim Rogovin: Троцкий о социальных отношениях в СССР [Trotsky on Social Relations in the USSR], *Социологические исследования*, 1990, № 5; Троцкий против Сталина [Trotsky against Stalin], *Экономические науки*, 1990, № 9; Неизвестный Троцкий [The Unknown Trotsky], *Аргументы и факты*, 1990, № 38; Троцкий и "троцкизм." К истории проблемы [Trotsky and "Trotskyism." Toward a History of the Problem], *Литературное обозрение*, 1991, № 8; Крушение и рождение мифов [The Destruction and Birth of Myths], *Литературное обозрение*, 1992, № 2.

2. XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 532 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 161].

3. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 8, С. 61 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 8, p. 65].

- [4.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 267 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, p. 267].
- [5.](#) КПСС в резолюциях и решениях, Т. 3, С. 392 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 3, p. 392].
- [6.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 8, С. 62 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 8, p. 66].
- [7.](#) XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 529 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 157].
- [8.](#) Бухарин, Н. И., *Избранные произведения*, 1988, С. 308 [N. I. Bukharin, *Selected Works*, 1988, p. 308].
- [9.](#) XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 530 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 158].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 531 [Ibid., p. 159].
- [11.](#) Там же, С. 529 [Ibid., pp. 157–158].
- [12.](#) Пути мировой революции. Седьмой расширенный пленум ИККИ. Стенографический отчет, М.-Л., 1927 Т. 2, С.102 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 183].
- [13.](#) Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. 2, С. 142 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 2, p. 142].
- [14.](#) XIV Съезд Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков), С. 135 [*Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*, p. 135].
- [15.](#) XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 530 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), 1980, p. 158].
- [16.](#) Бухарин, Н. И., *Избранные произведения*, 1988, С. 243 [N. I. Bukharin, *Selected Works*, 1988, p. 243].
- [17.](#) XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 526 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), pp. 154–155].
- [18.](#) Неделя, 1988, № 24 [*The Week*, 1988, № 24].
- [19.](#) Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. 2, С. 145 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 2, p. 145].
- [20.](#) Третий Всемирный Конгресс Коммунистического Интернационала. Стенографический отчет, Петроград, 1922, С. 187 [*Third World Congress of the Communist International*. Stenographic Record, Petrograd, 1922, p.187].
- [21.](#) The tragic consequences of this orientation, which was put into practice before Stalin's pact with Hitler, are vividly portrayed in Arthur Koestler's novel, *Darkness at Noon*.

40. Trotsky's Multifaceted Prognosis

Trotsky considered the very posing of the question to be incorrect: what is more likely — the Soviet Union's chances of completing the building of socialism, independent of what would be happening in the rest of the world; or the world proletariat's chances of gaining power before socialism was completed in the USSR? As he considered these alternatives, Trotsky examined primarily the situation in Europe, since he thought that, for the United States of America, the perspective of socialist revolution in the foreseeable future was not realistic.

In connection with this, he constructed a multifaceted prognosis for the next thirty to forty years, which he thought to be the shortest time possible for the building of socialism in the USSR without socialist revolution in the West. If one assumes that the European proletariat would not take power during these years (and only on such a perspective could the theory of "the victory of socialism in a single country" be constructed), then several variants of the development of events in Europe flow from this perspective.

The first variant: "Europe, like now, will fluctuate around the pre-war level. ... But we call this 'equilibrium' unstable, ... because it is unstable."¹ Such a situation cannot last twenty, thirty, or forty years, it must be decided one way or another. Consequently, either the second variant appears, supposing the "decay" of capitalism and the victory of the revolution in European countries; or we see the third variant — "European capitalism will continue to rise for the next thirty to fifty years, the length of time we needed to build socialism."² But in the last

case, developing capitalism, which will have, besides everything else, the corresponding technology and, in general, the corresponding resources, will be able, through the labor aristocracy, to arouse the masses for a war against the USSR. On such a variant, one cannot “build the perspective of socialism in our country.”³

Today, in examining the fate of Trotsky’s multifaceted prognosis, we must first of all stress that the history of the twentieth century proved to be “more cunning” than all the prognoses imaginable in the 1920s. Although in subsequent years Trotsky would often correct and partially alter his prognosis in accordance with changes in the international situation and internal conditions in the USSR, he continued to call capitalism “decaying.” There were very serious reasons for such an evaluation of capitalism in the 1930s: the world economic crisis gripping the entire capitalist world; the coming to power of fascism in Germany; and the Second World War, which began as a war between the leading capitalist powers.

Trotsky did not abandon hope for the European revolution, and there were also very serious reasons for not doing so then. In the 1930s, the majority of the European countries — Germany, France, and Spain most of all — went through a period of revolutionary crisis. The immediately revolutionary situation was not resolved in these countries by the victory of socialist revolution, primarily because of the monstrous mistakes of the Comintern, which was totally obedient to Stalin’s leadership. Stalin had destroyed thousands and thousands of foreign communists capable of leading the socialist revolution in their countries.⁴ A final factor was that the attractiveness of socialist ideas that had been compromised by Stalinist practice in the USSR was undermined in the consciousness of workers in the West. The cumulative result was that the possibilities inherent in the revolutionary situation in the European countries were lost.

All of the factors indicated above, which contributed to weakening the revolutionary movement, continued to be active at the end of the Second World War and immediately after it. At that time, many countries in Europe and Asia were the sites of anti-fascist and national-liberation

revolutions, which had a real chance to grow into socialist revolutions. But communists came to power mainly in the countries which were liberated by the Red Army (of course, there were exceptions: in Albania and Indochina there were no Soviet troops, and in Finland, Norway, and Austria, where these troops were present, future development went along capitalist lines). In the countries where there were Anglo-American troops, communists either did not dare to lead the people in a struggle for power (France, Italy), or they were defeated in a civil war (Greece).⁵

Later, world development was influenced by two major factors. First, socialism was betrayed and compromised by Stalinist forces, no longer on the scale of a single country, but on the scale of the entire so-called socialist camp. Second, capitalism was able to draw lessons from its enormous historical defeats and carry out global structural reforms in its own countries, both in relations with each other, and in relations with the “third world” (former colonies and semi-colonies).

Although the day after October did not witness the completion of the world revolution, which was fervently awaited by the masses in the midst of civil war and destruction, it did witness worldwide reform, which was the by-product of the unheard-of sacrifices made by our people for the common cause of socialism.⁶

Already by the eve of the 1920s, the eight-hour working day was established in Western Europe. As the biggest French bourgeois newspaper *Le Temps* wrote, it was the insurance premium for the refusal of Western European workers to follow the example of the October Revolution. Later, major social gains were made by the workers of advanced capitalist countries as a result, not only of their immediate revolutionary struggle, but of preventative concessions made by the ruling classes, which were frightened by the social challenge of socialism. Even Churchill virtually acknowledged this at a meeting in Tehran in 1943 when he raised a toast to Roosevelt “as a man who ... undoubtedly prevented revolution in the United States” due to his policy of the “New Deal,” which improved the situation of “the weak and helpless.”⁷ Objective historical laws begin to pave the way for themselves by other means.

Naturally, “world reform,” including the growing integration of advanced capitalist countries, the considerable softening of contradictions between them, and the collapse of the world colonial system, did not fundamentally change the nature of capitalism and imperialism.

The fate of world history in the next decades will be determined by processes unfolding not only in the advanced capitalist countries (the USA, Western Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia), whose combined population is approximately six hundred million people, but in the so-called developing, or dependent countries, the population of which is several times larger. This gap in the size of the population between leading and dependent capitalist countries will steadily grow due to the low birth rate in the former, and the high birth rate in the latter.

Even today, Lenin’s following statement remains in force: “The entire East,”⁸ comprising “a gigantic majority of the population” of the Earth, and consisting mainly of “exploited working people, reduced to the last degree of human suffering, has been forced into a position where its physical and material strength cannot possibly be compared with the physical, material, and military strength of any of the much smaller West-European states.”⁹

The gap between the advanced capitalist and dependent countries, when measured by the per capita Gross National Product in the 1980s, was eleven to one, and now continues to grow. In many countries of the “Third World,” real income per capita is now lower than at the beginning of the 1980s. On the entire globe, the absolute number of starving and illiterate people is now greater than any time before; so too, is the number of those who lack good water and adequate shelter. In the former republics of the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, now experiencing a period of backsliding to a retrograde, semi-colonial capitalism, the living standards of the majority of the population are declining rapidly. Thus, on a considerable part of the Earth’s territory, the process of not only a relative, but an absolute, immiseration of the population, is continuing.

Meanwhile, the situation in the leading capitalistic countries is now very remote from social harmony. Along with deepening social inequality in these countries, one sharply senses moral decline, expressed in the growth of economic and other criminality, porno- and narco-business, the rapid spread of AIDS, etc. The race for ever more powerful armaments, slowing only in recent years, and the ecological crisis have, for the first time in world history, placed the problem of survival before humanity.

All this shows that the capitalist system, viewed on a world scale, is by no means “the promised land.” The inherent internal contradictions will again and again raise the question of replacing it with a system based on social justice, the international solidarity of workers, and public ownership of the means of production, i.e., by socialism.

But such a change will encounter, in our opinion, not so much material, but ideological and psychological difficulties: the weakening in the minds of millions of people of the attractiveness of the socialist choice, undermined by the distortions over many years of socialist principles and ideals by Stalinism and its offspring: Maoism, Titoism, etc. For this reason, it is very important to show the anti-socialist essence of all these repressive regimes, the bearers of which were the “leaders” who passed through the school of a furious struggle against “Trotskyism.” The replacement of social justice by privileges and corruption; of peoples’ power by the domination of bureaucratic cliques; of the international solidarity of workers by hegemonism of the Stalinist or Maoist type — were the main reasons for the disintegration (from the beginning of the 1960s) of the so-called “socialist community.”

In that way, the most favorable opportunities for socialist development, created by the formation of a world system of socialist-oriented countries containing nearly one-third of the Earth’s population, were lost. The restoration of the full historical truth about the fate of the socialist revolutions, betrayed by Stalinist regimes, is called upon to safeguard communist forces from repeating even the smallest of mistakes and criminal acts, for which people ruled by Stalinists of all kinds had to pay an extremely heavy price.

Thus, while retrospectively evaluating the discussion of the 1920s about the possibility of the victory of socialism in a single country, we can come to the following conclusions:

1. After the Second World War, regimes supportive of the Soviet Union were established in about two dozen countries of Europe, Asia, and America. Thus, the main objective limitation to the victory of socialism in the USSR (and other countries) fell away. But the foundation of a world socialist system did not lead to the victory of socialism mainly because this system was built on the basis of Soviet hegemony and now reproduced Stalinist perversions of socialism on a global scale.

2. Under the influence of the social challenge of the countries building socialism, and of the class struggle of workers in their own states, the advanced capitalist countries carried out global social reconstruction (“world reform”), starting with the 1930s. As a result of these reforms, these countries underwent a new economic upsurge, a development without major economic crises and political shocks.

3. At the same time, developing capitalism of the 1940s to 1990s could not eliminate its global contradictions, and as a result, the question of the struggle for socialism on an international scale, as before, is not removed from the agenda. To find the ways to socialism, the communist forces of the entire world will have to return again and again to the ideas of “Trotskyism” of the 1920s and 1930s, and to develop them according to new historical experience.

1. XV Конференция Всесоюзной коммунистической партии (большевиков). Стенографический отчет, М., 1927, С. 532 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 160].

2. Там же [Ibid., p. 161].

3. Там же, С. 533 [Ibid.].

4. Let us cite some figures that have been made public in recent years. Out of three thousand Bulgarian emigrants living and working in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, every third was victimized, including six hundred of the most active Bulgarian communists who perished in Stalin's prisons and camps. Thousands of German communists who had come to Moscow according to party directives, or had volunteered to help the construction of socialism in the USSR, were handed over by Stalin to the Gestapo after the signing of the German-Soviet Pact. Nineteen members and candidate-members of the Central Committee of the German

Communist Party became victims of Nazi terror, sixteen were victims of Stalinist terror. No fewer losses from Stalin's repressive measures were suffered by Hungarian, Yugoslav, Polish, and other Communist Parties.

5. Both in the 1930s and 1940s, Stalin by no means wanted the spontaneous victory of anti-imperialist revolutions in Europe, since they inevitably would have undermined his domination in the world communist movement. Under conditions of the extreme intensification of inter-imperialist contradictions and a new rise of the revolutionary movement, he preferred geopolitical deals and a division of the world with leading capitalist powers, which became a straitjacket for the revolutionary movement in countries located in the latter's "sphere of influence."

6. Лифшиц, М., Нравственное значение Октябрьской революции, *Коммунист*, 1985, № 4, С. 50 [M. Lifshits, "The Moral Significance of the October Revolution," *Communist*, 1985, № 4, p. 50].

7. Шервуд, Р., Рузвельт и Гопкинс, в 2 Т., М., 1958, Т. 2, С. 489 [R. Shervud, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, Moscow, 1958, Volume 2, p. 489].

8. In today's conditions, what is used is the more precise, but also conventional, division of the world not into "East" and "West," but "North" and "South."

9. Ленин, В. И., *Полное Собрание Сочинений*, Т. 45, С. 403 [Lenin, *CW*, Volume 33, "Better Fewer, But Better," pp. 499–500].

*Images from the Chinese Revolution in the journal **Prozhektor**, 1927*



Long Live the Revolutionary Army of China!
***Prozhektor**, 15 March 1927*

*Images from the Chinese Revolution in the journal **Prozhektor**, 1927*



“A Black Deed.”

Prozhektor, 30 April 1927

Judas: You got \$15 million? That's a lot. I only got 30 pieces of silver.

Chiang Kai-shek: But you only betrayed one man. I betrayed — the whole Chinese nation ...

*Images from the Chinese Revolution in the journal **Prozhektor**, 1927*

Ш А Н Х А Й В З Я Т !



Да здравствует победивший рабочий!

Shanghai is Taken!
Long Live the Victory of the Chinese Workers!
Prozhektor, 31 March 1927

41. Counting on World Revolution

In recent years, the Soviet press has featured an incalculable number of articles presenting the idea that the Bolsheviks' strategy, which "counted exclusively on the world revolution,"¹ was fundamentally flawed, and that the Bolsheviks overestimated the possibilities of revolution in Europe in the 1920s. Meanwhile, not only the Bolsheviks themselves, but also the more serious and perceptive politicians of the capitalist world, spoke of the mortal danger which threatened European capitalism at the end of the First World War.

In 1919, the prime minister of England, Lloyd George, wrote to French premier Clemenceau and to American president Wilson:

All of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. In the workers' ranks there prevails a deep feeling of not only dissatisfaction, but of anger and indignation over the conditions that existed before the war. From one end of Europe to the other, the masses are no longer satisfied with the political, social, and economic structure of the entire contemporary order.²

After two rounds of European revolutions (in 1918–1920 and in 1923) that had ended in their defeat, the revolutionary movement in Europe and Asia had by no means died out. This was proven by two of the most significant events of the mid-1920s: the general strike in England and the revolution in China. It was precisely around the evaluation of these events that the most serious differences arose between the governing faction and the Left Opposition over international (Comintern) issues.

Faced with the decline of the revolutionary wave in Europe after the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, the Stalin-Bukharin group

concluded that European capitalism had entered a period of protracted stabilization. In contrast, Trotsky, who had continued to analyze international events closely, arrived at the conclusion that this “stabilization” was, in actual fact, unstable in one of the most “successful” capitalist countries, namely Great Britain. In 1925, in his book *Where is Britain Going?*, Trotsky wrote that even if Europe, including England, were to achieve a more or less prolonged period of social equilibrium, it would not be able to reach such a stage without enduring a number of the most serious class conflicts. He exposed the contradiction in England’s situation, which was expressed in the fact that the country was in ruins, its production had fallen, and the unfavorable balance of its foreign trade was growing. Under these conditions, the political stabilization of England was secured primarily by the conciliatory leadership of the British trade unions. The book contained a prognosis about the possibility of a general strike in England in the nearest future.

A miners’ strike began in England on 1 May 1926. The General Council of Trade Unions declared a general strike in its support. However, already by 12 May, the same General Council shut down the strike.

Prior to the strike, an Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee of Unity had been created. The committee represented a bloc between the leadership of the Soviet trade unions and the General Council of British trade unions. The official conception of the Politburo presupposed a leftward shift of the General Council and the gradual strengthening of the influence of communists both in the trade unions and in the Labour Party.



Meeting of the Anglo-Russian Committee on 8-9 December 1925 in Berlin. Sitting in front row, from right to left, Albert Purcell, Mikhail Tomskey, and Arthur Pugh.

After the betrayal of the general strike by the General Council, Trotsky declared that to express solidarity, directly or indirectly, with the leaders of the British General Council of the Trades Union Congress would be fundamentally incorrect, and he demanded a break with the Anglo-Russian Committee. He would later write:

Stalin clung to the bloc, even to the semblance of one, with all his might. The British trade-unionists waited until their acute inner crisis was at an end, and then pushed aside their generous but slow-witted ally with an impolite nudge of the leg.³

In September 1927, in connection with the breaking by the English government of diplomatic relations with the USSR, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress liquidated the Anglo-Russian Committee.

At the beginning of 1927, a new wave of disagreements between the governing faction and the Left Opposition emerged in connection with the revolutionary events that had developed in China. Several years prior to those events, the Chinese Communist Party, in accordance with a decision of the Comintern leadership, became a member of the bourgeois party of the Kuomintang and was subordinated to its military discipline. In its turn, the Kuomintang joined the Comintern. Beneath the smokescreen of the Comintern's name and authority, however, the Kuomintang did not subordinate itself in the least to the Comintern's

decisions. The Kuomintang supported the military cliques of the landowners who stood at the head of the Chinese army.

On the crest of the massive revolutionary movement in China at the end of 1926 and the beginning of 1927, the Politburo issued orders to the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party to arm the workers minimally, so as not to antagonize the bourgeoisie, landowners, and generals. In April 1927,



Chiang Kai-Shek in January 1927

Stalin still defended the policy of a coalition with the Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-Shek and appealed for him to be trusted. Several days following Stalin's appeal, Chiang Kai-Shek carried out a counter-revolutionary coup, broke with his Communist allies and drowned the Shanghai workers and the Communist Party in blood. In May and June, the right wing of the Kuomintang carried out still another series of counter-revolutionary coups in eastern, southern, and central China. After this, Stalin and Bukharin, whom these events had caught completely unawares, ordered the Communists to support the Left-Kuomintang regime in Wuhan. However, in July 1927, this regime, too, turned against the Communists.

Since 1925, Trotsky had called for the Communists to leave the

Kuomintang. In 1927, he advanced a program which included a break with the Chinese militarists, immediate expropriation of private landholdings, guarantees for the full independence of the Chinese Communist Party, and the creation of Soviets. He emphasized that the realization of this program would facilitate the development of the peasant war, in the course of which “the Communist Party would have grown not by the day, but by the hour, and its cadres would have been tempered in the fire of revolutionary struggle.”⁴

The rejection of these ideas by the Stalin-Bukharin leadership of the Comintern brought about the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1927. The civil war in China, combined with the Sino-Japanese war in the wake of Japanese aggression, lasted for another twenty-two years.

The leadership of the Comintern considered the readiness of both the Chinese and other Communist parties “to vote night and day against ‘Trotskyism’”⁵ to be the main criterion for their “Bolshevization.” Therefore, right up to the mid-1930s, the Chinese Communist Party was subjected to constant purges. Together with the death of a number of Communists in the civil war, these purges reduced the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party significantly, deprived the party of many of its leaders, and solidified the domination of the Mao Zedong group after 1935. Having been trained in the struggle against “Trotskyism” and in the Stalinist distortions of Marxist theory, this group, once in power, repeated, with several national modifications, the most monstrous deformations and excesses of Stalinism.

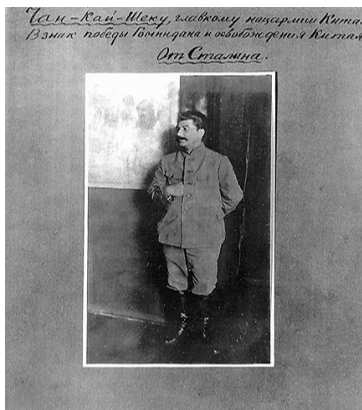
Following the defeat of the Chinese Revolution, as Trotsky later recalled:

A wave of excitement swept over the party. The opposition raised its head. ... It seemed to a great many young comrades that the obvious bankruptcy of Stalin's policy should bring the victory of the opposition nearer.⁶

Trotsky himself held the opposite opinion. He tried to show his friends:

The opposition could not rise on the *defeat* of the Chinese Revolution. The confirmation of our prognosis might attract one thousand, five thousand, or

even ten thousand new supporters to us. But for the millions, the significant thing was not our forecast, but the very fact of the crushing of the Chinese proletariat. After the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, after the break-down of the English general strike in 1926, the new defeat in China would only intensify the disappointment of the masses with regard to the international revolution. And it was this same disappointment that served as the chief psychological source for Stalin's policy of national-reformism.⁷



A photo inscribed by Stalin in April 1927: "To Chiang Kai-Shek, commander-in-chief of the nationalist army of China, in recognition of the victory of the Kuomintang and of the liberation of China. From Stalin."

In subsequent years, when reflecting on the reasons for Stalin's victory in the inner-party struggle of the 1920s, Trotsky repeatedly returned to the idea that one of the main reasons for Stalin's victory was the enormous defeats of the Communists in Germany, England, and China. These defeats were, in their turn, determined by the opportunist policy of the triumvirate, and then of the duumvirate, which led the Comintern, and consequently, all the foreign Communist parties. Through its mistaken directives, the Comintern leadership of that time essentially missed enormous revolutionary opportunities and blocked the paths of the socialist revolution in Europe and Asia.

1. Ленин, В. И., *Полное Собрание Сочинений*, Т. 42, С. 1 [Lenin, CW, Volume 31, p. 397].

2. *Правда*, 1989, 3 марта [*Pravda*, 3 March 1989].

3. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, М., 1991, С. 501 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 528].

4. Троцкий, Л. Д. *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 170 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 132].

5. Там же, С. 173 [*Ibid.*, p. 134].

6. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, М., 1991, С. 503 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 530].

[7](#). Там же [Ibid.].

42. The “Idyll” of the NEP

Among the issues of the international Communist movement, the disagreements between the Left Opposition and the ruling faction embraced an entire series of economic, social, and political problems pertaining to socialist construction in the USSR. In order to understand the essence of these disagreements, we must analyze the basic tendencies of economic development and social relations during the period of the NEP.

At the end of the 1980s, a fairly large number of works appeared in our historical literature which spoke of the gigantic success of the Soviet economy during that period. These conclusions, however, were made on the basis of an uncritical use of official Soviet statistics, which ignored the true scale of inflation.

In the 1920s, the famous Russian statistician S. N. Prokopovich, who directed the émigré economic institute in Prague, called into question the validity of reports by the TsSU, or Central Statistics Administration, which claimed that the national income of the USSR in 1926 exceeded the 1913 level by 3 percent. Moreover, he doubted that Soviet Russia even in 1928 had attained the pre-revolutionary level of national income per capita. According to a number of contemporary foreign and Soviet economists, the national income in 1928 comprised 90–95 percent — and the per capita income 80–85 percent — of the 1913 level.¹

Exports and imports by the USSR in 1927 comprised less than 40 percent of the pre-war level. Over the NEP years, the technological gap

increased between the capitalist countries and the USSR, whose industry still operated predominantly on pre-war technology.

But perhaps another picture was observed in agriculture, which, as the works of several contemporary publicists have asserted, during the NEP years flourished in unheard-of ways? To confirm this thesis, figures are usually given suggesting that the wholesale production of agriculture during these years more than doubled. However, these figures turned out to be so striking because they were calculated from 1921 or 1922, when the country had just emerged from the Civil War and was experiencing an unprecedented crop failure as well as mass famine. Using similar methodology, one could conclude that there was an even greater leap in agricultural production in the first five years after World War Two, when production relations in the countryside were nothing like those during the NEP. But this was because, by 1945, agricultural production had fallen nearly to the 1921 level, and by 1950 it had reached the level of 1940. Agricultural production in the USSR also grew at a rapid pace again between 1953 and 1959, and between 1965 and 1970.

A more correct interpretation of the statistics indicates that by 1928 the general area of land under cultivation had not reached that of the pre-war era, while maintaining at the same time an extremely low level of productivity. In 1927, wholesale production surpassed the 1913 level by 21 percent (the population of the USSR increased by roughly the same amount during that time). This growth, however, occurred thanks to the cultivation of livestock and industrial crops. During this time, for example, the production of sugar-beets in 1925 reached only 70 percent of the pre-war level, and drew close to the pre-war figure only toward the end of the 1920s. A similar picture was observed with flax, as well. By the end of the NEP, however, the production of grain crops, measured by area sown, still remained below the pre-war level. Annual wholesale production of grain during the second half of the 1920s was 30–50 million centners (100-kilogram units) lower than during 1913 (765 million centners), and barely surpassed that level only in 1926. In addition, as a result of the breaking up of peasant farms and their increased consumption of agricultural products (including the use of

grain to fatten up cattle), in 1925/1926 the export of agricultural products from farm to the market was merely 46 percent of the pre-war level. Agricultural exports, which comprised 64.2 percent of all exports to foreign countries, during the 1926/1927 economic year amounted to 42 percent of the 1913 level. For roughly the same quantity of harvested grain, 96.5 million centners were exported in 1913, while 21.8 million centners were exported in 1926.

The productivity of labor in agriculture was extremely low. Even in 1928, more than 70 percent of spring crops were sown by hand, nearly half of all the grain was harvested with sickles and scythes, while more than 40 percent of threshing was done with flails and rollers. One farm worker produced enough to “feed” only one person other than himself.

Social differentiation in the countryside was proceeding rapidly, especially after 1925. Yuri Larin called the “idyllically-saccharine depiction of the countryside” in the 1920s, as a countryside without kulaks, completely unjustified. He calculated that in 1927 there were 650,000 farms that had become kulak households before the revolution. Contemporary historians, having made similar calculations according to other sources, conclude that “as a whole, the kulaks of the 1920s had their origin in the pre-revolutionary period.”²

After the decision in 1925 to allow the renting of land and the hiring of labor in the countryside, the principle of equalizing land usage became ever more undermined. Lenin’s words regarding the production of small commodities became ever more valid: “Even on land belonging to the whole nation ... only those who have the implements, livestock, machines, stocks of seed, money in general, etc., will be able to farm independently,”³ while those who have nothing except their hands to work with will inevitably sell themselves into bondage to the kulak.

In 1927, the farms of “batraki” (proletarian farm laborers) and semi-proletarian poor peasants by region amounted to 25–40 percent of all the farms; the farms of middle peasants amounted to 40–50 percent; and the well-to-do group, which consisted of entrepreneurial and small-capitalist farms, comprised from 15 to 20 percent. The number of hired laborers in the countryside equaled 3.5 million, 1.6 million of which were “batraki.”

In 1927, 28.3 percent of peasant farms — and 38.3 percent in Ukraine — had no livestock used for work. At the same time, roughly 6 percent of the farms had three to four or more horses. Three to 4 percent of the richest farms possessed 15 to 20 percent of the means of production and roughly one-third of the agricultural machinery owned by the peasantry. One-third of the peasants were practically “batraki,” since they worked as hired hands for the prosperous peasants and kulaks or rented livestock and equipment from them in order to work their own land.

In addition to hired labor and the renting out of the means of production on slavish terms, the renting of land was another element of exploitative relations in the countryside. The general scale of rented land in 1927 embraced fifteen million *desiatinas*,⁴ not including hidden rent, which was widely practiced as a means of avoiding the payment of taxes. As a result of the concentration of rent, more than three-fourths of all the rented land was controlled by 10 percent of the richest farms. The entrepreneurial kulak elements developed supplementary trades, practiced usury, etc.

According to statistics of a commission under the Sovnarkom of the USSR, investigating questions of tax assessment, the number of entrepreneurial (kulak) farms grew from 728,000 to 826,000 during the period of the economic years of 1924/1925 through 1926/1927, while their relative weight among the overall number of peasant farms rose from 3.3 percent to 3.9 percent.

A contemporary expert on the agrarian history of the USSR, V. P. Danilov, notes that, right up to 1928, “the kulaks remained a real, and moreover, developing social force in the countryside.” At the same time, in terms of their social profile, kulaks “were not at all farmers, organizing large-scale production and managing it on the basis of modern science and technology, but to a significant degree they were the very same old Russian blood-suckers.”⁵ In support of this assertion, Danilov refers to the opinion of such well-known agronomists and economists of the 1920s as N. D. Kondratiev, A. V. Chayanov and L. N. Litoshenko. Although they were by no means Marxists in their views, these historians refer to the kulak households of that period as “semi-capitalist, semi-

proletarian” (that is, managing their farms partly by their own labor, partly by the labor of others) farms of the “industrial,” or entrepreneurial, kind.

It was precisely these farmers who represented the main proprietors of marketable agricultural production. Although, by the end of the 1920s the main producers of grain became the middle and poor peasantry, who yielded up to four billion poods,⁶ (2.5 billion poods before the revolution), only 400–440 million poods were actually available for sale. Eighty-five percent of the peasant farms (of poor or lower-middle peasants) produced only 28 percent of the marketable grain. By 1 April 1926, 58 percent of all the grain surpluses in the countryside remained in the hands of 6 percent of the peasant farms.

After 1923, the government lowered prices of many industrial goods and raised prices on a number of agricultural products. Because industry developed slowly in 1925–26, consumer demand began to outstrip the production of industrial goods. Meanwhile, the government continued to take measures directed toward the accumulation of money in the countryside. In 1926 the overall level of agricultural tax was lowered from 313 million to 245 million rubles. During the good harvest years of 1926 and 1927, the lowering of taxes benefited primarily the prosperous peasants, whose surplus production increased.

At the same time there developed a system of cheap state credit for the peasant farms. Credit and machinery (bought, for the most part, by the government from foreign countries) were utilized primarily by the kulaks and the prosperous middle peasants, who possessed the means to purchase technology and pay for it in credit installments.

Having received major political and economic concessions, including the right to vote, the right to join soviets and cooperatives, the capitalist elements in the countryside began to fight more actively for the further strengthening of their economic and political role, which had already become virtually predominant in the agricultural credit cooperatives. All this inevitably led to a sharpening of class conflicts in the countryside. According to statistics, which are far from complete, in 1926 more than four hundred — and in 1927, more than one thousand — instances of

kulak terror were reported, in which 1,150 communists and non-party village activists became victims.

In 1924, the supply of grain to the cities and the growing working class, as well as the acquisition of grain for export, began to take place on a market basis (the tax-in-kind was replaced by state purchases of agricultural products). Because the volume of money the government could spend on this purchase was limited, even at fixed prices, it became necessary to resort to printing more money. This entailed a loss of the ruble's gold content, a growth of inflation, a strengthening of consumer demand, and a decrease in export-import operations.

Beginning with the July Plenum of 1926, the Left Opposition turned its attention to the lag in state industry and to the growth of those forces in the city and the country which wanted to place the development of the country on a capitalist path. The Left Opposition emphasized that a special danger was posed by the increase in the economic and political role of the kulaks, who once again were steadily establishing a path of primitive capitalist accumulation. At the same time, as a result of the ruin and liquidation of their farms, the poor, and to some extent, the middle layers, were sinking into the kulak's service, resulting in two million redundant workers annually. Nor did the surplus labor find employment in the cities, since the slowly developing state industry could employ no more than 100,000 individuals per year. The lag in state industry, the growth of unemployment in the cities, agrarian overpopulation, and social differentiation in the countryside resulted in a network of interconnected imbalances capable of leading to a serious economic crisis.

It is important to emphasize that similarly alarming conclusions were drawn at that time also by Dzerzhinsky, who, as chair of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, understood better than others the state of the national economy. Although he was held captive by ideas about the "fatal nature" of the Opposition's line, in his characterization of the basic tendencies of the country's socioeconomic development, Dzerzhinsky essentially agreed with the Opposition's conclusions regarding the lack of

planning, the unsystematic nature of the economic leadership, and the growth of private capitalist tendencies in the economy of the country.

In a letter to Kuibyshev on 3 July 1926, Dzerzhinsky wrote:

The present system is a vestige of the past. ... The Council of Labor and Defense and the Politburo now answer for everything. One cannot compete with the private entrepreneur, with capitalism, or with one's enemies in this way. This is not work, but utter torture. The functional commissariats ... are a life of paralysis and the life of the bureaucratic-functionary. And we will not tear ourselves from this paralysis without surgery, without courage, without lightning. Everyone is waiting for this surgery. This will be the word and the deed which everyone is waiting for. ... We are now in the swamp. Dissatisfaction and expectation surround us everywhere.²

Dzerzhinsky emphasized that the cooperatives, whose socialist character was often discussed, in practice were rejecting the measures proposed to them for the struggle against speculation. As a result, the private producers and merchants were continuing to grow and amass their wealth, while the cooperatives were striking a blow against both the consumer and state industry. All this could be explained by:

... our lack of a single line and firm power. Every commissariat, all the deputies and assistants and members of the commissariats, have their own line. There is no speed, no timeliness or correctness of decisions. In my inner core I protest against what is going on. I am fighting against everyone. To no avail.

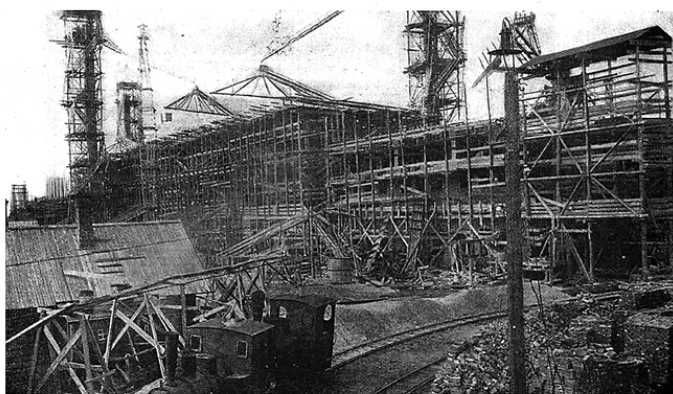
Realizing that his statements on all these issues objectively amounted to an admission that the ruling faction was incapable of effectively managing the national economy, Dzerzhinsky wrote:

But what should I do? I am completely certain that we can deal with all our enemies if we find and follow the correct line in the practical management of the country and the economy, if we take in hand the lost tempo that now lags behind the demands of life. If we do not find this line and tempo — our opposition will grow and the country will then find its own dictator — a grave-digger of the revolution — no matter how many red feathers he may wear on his suit. Nearly all the present dictators — Mussolini, Piłsudski — are former reds.³

¹. *Коммунист*, 1991, № 1, С. 73 [*Communist*, 1991, № 1, p. 73].

2. *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1989, № 7, С. 47 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1989, № 7, p. 47].
3. Ленин, В. И., *Полное собрание сочинений*, Т. 12, С. 96 [Lenin, CW, Volume 10, "The Proletariat and the Peasantry," p. 42].
4. One desiatina equals approximately 2.7 acres.
5. *История СССР*, 1990, № 5, С. 10–11 [*History of the USSR*, 1990, № 5, pp. 10–11].
6. One pood equals approximately thirty-six pounds.
7. *Коммунист*, 1989, № 8, С. 87–88 [*Communist*, 1989, № 8, pp. 87–88].
8. Там же [Ibid].

СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЕ СТРОИТЕЛЬСТВО.



Семестрой. Общий вид строительства.

"Socialist Construction." New factories being built.



Working the land with new agricultural machinery.

43. “Super-Industrialization,” “Robbing the Peasantry,” and Popular Measures

The basis for the direction and tempo of socialist construction during NEP conditions, as described in the documents of the Left Opposition, was derived from Trotsky’s programmatic economic works of 1922–1923. Trotsky emphasized that the introduction of the NEP, or market relations, was required primarily in order to stimulate the development of the individual peasant farm.

Without a free market, the peasant does not find his place in economic life and loses the incentive to improve and extend his production. ... The path to this (i.e., the extension of production – V. R.) lies in improving the economic life of today’s peasant-landowner. The workers’ state can achieve this only through the market, which arouses the personal interest of the petty producer.¹

From these positions, Trotsky examined the tasks of industrialization as well. In his report at the Twelfth Party Congress [in 1923] he said that “only the kind of industry which yields more than it consumes will emerge victorious. Industry living at the expense of the budget, that is, at the expense of agriculture, cannot create a firm and enduring foundation for the proletarian dictatorship.”² Of course, a certain transfer of resources from agriculture to industry is inevitable during the first stages of industrialization. At the same time, however, “it is necessary that the

peasant should give not less than he is able to give, but also not more. We must resolve to take from the peasant an amount ensuring that he is richer next year than this year.”³

In 1925 Trotsky warned:

Poverty in one case or another might attempt to push us in the direction of war communism, poor committees, or the “dekulakization” of the kulak. We must not allow this to happen. Such a policy will strike a blow tomorrow against the middle peasant, destroy the peasant’s personal interest in the products of his labor, and return the countryside to the level of 1920–1921.⁴

Trotsky presented a detailed analysis of the perspectives for agricultural development in his 1925 book, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism?* In this work, Trotsky called attention to the steady growth of the state sector’s role in the sphere of industry, transport, trade, and the financial-credit system.

The situation is much more complex in agriculture. This should come as no surprise to a Marxist. The transition from a scattered form of agriculture to a socialist cultivation of the land is conceivable only through a series of consecutive technical, economic, and cultural stages.⁵

The basic condition for such a transition is the successful development of state industry, which creates the technology for agriculture and therefore the preconditions for its collectivization.

Trotsky saw the contradiction between the development of state industry and individual agriculture as a struggle of two tendencies — socialist and capitalist. The outcome of this struggle depended on each tendency’s tempo of development. This meant:

... if state industry were to develop *more slowly* than agriculture, and if from the latter there were to emerge, *at an ever-increasing rate*, two opposing groups — capitalist farmers at the top and proletarians at the bottom — then such a process would lead, of course, to the restoration of capitalism.⁶

Such a perspective was not excluded in theory.

If the ruling party were to commit one political error after another, and if it were to thereby impede the growth of industry, which is now developing in such a promising manner, and if it were to relinquish its control over political

and economic processes in the countryside, then, of course, the cause of socialism in our country would be lost.⁷

Progress toward socialism could be secured only if the tempo of industrial development was not lagging behind the general development of agriculture, but leading it along, systematically drawing the country closer to the technological level of the advanced capitalist countries.

Trotsky emphasized that the conclusion of the reconstruction period was leading the USSR to a starting line from which its real economic competition with world capitalism would begin. Therefore the future successes of the Soviet economy would need to be measured by comparing achievements not with the 1913 economy, but with the quantitative and qualitative indicators on the European and world market. This required the creation of a system of coefficients and indicators which would allow for a comparison of the quality and price of Soviet products with international ones.

Convinced that the rate of industrialization carried a particular significance in the economic competition with capitalism, Trotsky emphasized that the high rate of industrial growth achieved during the reconstruction period (48 percent in 1924), when industry developed on the technological basis inherited from tsarist Russia, would inevitably drop during the following years, as industry exhausted the possibility of rapid growth based on the recommission of old productive capacity and began to upgrade its basic technologies. Nevertheless, even in this period, the initial period of industrialization, the tempo of industrial development could be significantly higher than in the pre-war period of Russian industry. The possibilities of increasing the tempo were conditioned objectively by the advantages of the Soviet economy over capitalist economies: namely, the lack of overconsumption by the parasitic classes, the specialization and concentration of production, and the use of planning. In aggregate, the correct use of these inherent advantages might “raise in the near future the coefficient of industrial growth not only two, but even three times higher than the pre-war rate of 6 percent and, perhaps, even higher.”⁸

In 1926, Trotsky concluded that the tempo of industrial development was quite insufficient, and this in turn was impeding the development of agriculture. The slow expansion of industrialization caused the already high prices on industrial goods to remain high or even rise uncontrollably, which in turn had a most unfavorable effect on the situation, not only for the working class, but also for most of the peasant masses. This conclusion was confirmed by the growth of unfulfilled consumer demands, which undermined market incentives in the sphere of agriculture. The fundamental accumulation of capital, which was impossible to realize under conditions of shortages, was concentrated in the countryside and distributed, moreover, quite unequally, since the greater portion remained in the hands of the prosperous peasantry. The growing surpluses of agricultural production, which had been concentrated in the upper ranks of the countryside, in the absence of a surplus of industrial goods, was becoming a factor that disorganized the economy and increased the conflict between the city and the countryside. A serious economic threat, due to the impossibility, even in the event of a good harvest, of guaranteeing food provisions to the city, was beginning to threaten the country.

The first symptoms of the approaching crisis became apparent in 1925. The high rate of capitalist accumulation by the kulak elements in the countryside and the Nepmen in the city began to impede the development of the state sector of the economy. Because the prosperous layers of the countryside refused to sell their grain to the state at fixed prices, the state failed to receive the quantity of grain which it had planned for export and was therefore forced to reduce its imports of machinery and equipment. The inevitability of renewed “grain strikes” resulted from the ruling faction’s policy toward cooperatives and taxation. To an ever-increasing degree, supply, market, credit, and other forms of agricultural cooperatives began to unite and serve the prosperous layers of the peasantry, while catering to the interests of the “more productive middle peasant,” a name usually designating none other than the kulak.”⁹ “The richer the peasant,” the Opposition stated in its theses on work in the countryside, “the more it receives from the

present agricultural cooperatives, whose funds are amassed to an enormous degree at the expense of the Soviet state.”¹⁰ Due to the absence of progressive taxation on peasant households, the poor-peasantry groups in the countryside were paying relatively no less in direct taxes than prosperous peasants. In 1927, 34 percent of peasant farms commanded 18 percent of the total income in the countryside; the “top” group of peasants, which comprised merely 7.5 percent of households, commanded the very same income. Meanwhile, each of these groups paid the same portion (nearly 20 percent) of the total sum of agricultural taxes. The tax clearly placed a much more onerous burden upon each individual poor peasant farm than upon the kulak and “strong” farms.

All these factors steadily increased the differentiation of the countryside, led to both an absolute and relative growth of prosperous kulak elements, and to an increase in the dependence of the state and industry on their resources, both raw materials and those intended for export.

Under these conditions, the Opposition insisted on a differentiated approach to taxation of the various layers of peasantry. At the April Plenum of the CC in 1926, Trotsky supported the proposal of the “New Opposition” to exempt 40–50 percent of the poorest and neediest peasant farms from taxation without levying any kind of additional tax on the middle peasantry, while increasing, at the same time, the taxes of the more prosperous layers of the peasantry.

Subsequently, the Opposition developed proposals directed at weakening the process of differentiation in the countryside and limiting the exploitative tendencies of the kulaks by means of a more flexible taxation policy. The Opposition proposed to replace the existing system of agriculture taxation, which failed to account for the profitability of peasant farms and therefore placed a greater burden on the poor elements, “with a tax on land according to its quality and proximity to consumer markets (i.e., a rent tax), which, moreover, exempts all the poor and needy farms. The capitalist, kulak peasants at the top, however, are liable to an additional progressive income tax.”¹¹ This was the policy,

the Opposition believed, which could accomplish the transfer of resources from agriculture to the needs of industrialization.

The ruling faction responded to these proposals with countless articles that reproached the Opposition for exaggerating the strength and influence of the kulak and even for seeking to “rob the peasantry.” A statement “On the Successes and Failures of the Campaign for an Economic Policy,” signed by Rykov, Stalin, and Kuibyshev, claimed that one of the Opposition’s possible paths for industrialization consisted of “robbing the peasantry to the highest possible degree, squeezing from them the maximum quantity of resources, and passing it on to industry. This is the path which several comrades are pushing us toward.”¹²

The main defender of the line toward “reconciliation with the countryside” was primarily Stalin himself, as he spoke out in the struggle against the Opposition. His “liberalism” in the sphere of socioeconomic policy during those years was dictated by the goal of securing for himself a solid rear for the political isolation of those forces in the party who acted as the main obstacle in his path toward the attainment of complete power.

Stalin’s speeches of this period contain not a trace of alarm regarding the state of the economy and social relations. In his polemic with the Opposition, he invariably juggled statistics in order to present an extremely encouraging picture of the country’s situation and no less encouraging perspectives offered by the version of the NEP which took effect after the Fourteenth Party Conference [1925]. Regarding the differentiation of the peasantry, he declared that it was “occurring in completely original forms” — “in the midst of a significant narrowing of the distance between two polar extremes,” that is, between the kulaks and the poor.¹³

Stalin took an equally “moderate” position during those years on questions of industrialization. He stubbornly rejected the demands of the Opposition to increase capital investments in industry and to raise taxes, for that purpose, on the bourgeois layers of the city and country (the Nepmen and kulaks). At the same time, throughout his entire struggle against the Opposition, Stalin no less stubbornly avoided answering the

question of the sources of industrialization. His only “contribution” toward the resolution of this question lay in his proposal to increase the production of state vodka in order to invest the revenue in the development of industry.

The ruling faction enacted this measure in an intense struggle against Trotsky and his supporters, who felt that the issue of selling state vodka was of enormous significance since it “intrudes upon the life of the broad masses.” Criticizing the “method of gradual, inconspicuous introduction of state vodka” as a harmful and inadmissible measure, Trotsky refuted the argument that this measure served as an effective means of struggle against distilling moonshine.

One of two things: either we will want to make a large profit by producing expensive vodka, and selling it at an even higher price — then the peasant will prefer to distill his own; but if we want to compete against moonshine, then we will lose the fiscal incentive.¹⁴

Trotsky demanded a discussion of the state vodka question at a party congress or conference. This proposal was rejected, however, by a Politburo majority. The state production and sale of vodka was then officially legalized by a decree of the Central Executive Committee [TsIK] and the Sovnarkom on 25 August 1925.

By the end of 1925, Trotsky called the sale of state vodka “a terrible and profoundly fundamental mistake.”

As should have been foreseen, before it could successfully supplant moonshine in the countryside, state vodka became well-established in the city. It undermines the standard of living of the working masses. It stunts their cultural growth. It lowers the authority of the state in their eyes. Its fiscal advantages in no way conceal the blows which it strikes against the economy, by physiologically and spiritually affecting the driving force of socialist construction — the working class.¹⁵

Proceeding from this analysis at the April Plenum of 1926, Trotsky highlighted as a separate point, among his corrections to Rykov’s draft resolution on the economic situation, the necessity of reviewing the vodka question “on the basis of our previous experience, which demonstrates that the state sale of vodka, while playing an extremely

insignificant role in the influx of resources from the countryside into heavy industry (such was its goal), cuts seriously into the worker's salary."¹⁶

The consumption of vodka grew from 0.6 bottles per capita in the economic year 1924/1925 to 4.3 in 1926/1927. In the theses of the Central Committee on the five-year plan, presented to the Fifteenth Party Congress, the CC spoke in general terms about the need to combat drunkenness, yet did not mention the option of reducing state revenue from vodka sales and other alcoholic products. On the contrary, the five-year plan included an increase of revenue from the sale of vodka products. In accordance with the projections of Gosplan, the consumption of vodka per capita was projected to increase by 227% during the first five-year plan — much higher than the consumption of other products. In light of this, the “Countertheses of the Opposition” emphasized:

The state sale of vodka was originally introduced as an experiment, and with the understanding that the main share of the revenue from the sales would be invested in industrialization, primarily for the improvement of metallurgy. In reality, industrialization merely suffered from the sale of vodka. The experiment should be acknowledged as a complete failure. ... The rise in work truancy, careless work, the increased number of defective goods, the damaging of machines, the growth in the number of accidents, fires, fights, serious injuries, etc. (as a result of drunkenness – V. R.) cost hundreds of millions of rubles per year. State industry loses no less from vodka than the budget receives from vodka, and several times more than industry itself receives from the budget. The ending of sales of state vodka in the shortest period (two–three years) would automatically raise the material and spiritual resources of industrialization.¹⁷

As a counterbalance to these demands by the Opposition, Stalin merely promised to end the state sale of vodka as “an extraordinary temporary measure ... as soon as new sources of new revenue are found in our national economy for the further development of our industry,”¹⁸ but in fact, vodka revenue consistently increased in proportion to the development of industrialization. The unprecedented campaign of accustoming the people to hard drinking, which unfolded after 1925 and

continues to this day, delivered a colossal blow to the physical, spiritual, and moral health of the Soviet people.

Along with the increase in the “vodka tax,” or, that is, the most harmful method for the national economy of weakening the consumer deficit, the ruling faction, which was lacking an integral socioeconomic program, resorted to administrative manipulations in the sphere of setting prices. On the surface, these maneuvers appeared to be “looking out for workers’ interests,” but in reality, they deepened disproportions in the national economy. The February Plenum of the CC in 1927 resolved to lower both wholesale and retail prices on industrial goods. At first glance, this policy appeared to continue the struggle to close the “price scissors,” which Trotsky had proposed in 1923. By 1927, however, the struggle was now being waged under completely different economic conditions, in which the main problem was no longer an oversupply but a shortage of goods. The policy of price reduction was directly tied to the struggle against the Left Opposition, which proposed to raise prices on industrial goods by 20 to 30 percent in order to alleviate the goods deficit and curtail the speculative profits of private merchants who resold deficit goods at higher prices. An important reason for the decision to lower prices was the desire to counterpose, in the eyes of the broad masses, this popular measure to the “unpopular” measures proposed by the Opposition.

The policy of administrative price reduction deepened the deficit even more and increased the gap between state and free-market prices. It also led to the enrichment of private capital, which accounted for more than one-fifth of trade circulation, including more than 50 percent of the trade



Prices Lowered on All Goods

in retail consumer goods. By allowing the private entrepreneur to profit from the scissors between agricultural and industrial, or between domestic and international prices, this policy simultaneously led to the reduction of revenue for state industrial enterprises, and therefore hindered the raising of workers' salaries and the expansion of the industrial sector. Meanwhile, the need for industrial accumulation had grown sharply, since by the 1925/1926 fiscal year, the old enterprises had been completely restored and new industrial construction had begun to develop. The economic disproportions connected with this appeared to have weakened thanks to the assistance of increased state monetary emission.

In their countertheses, the Opposition noted that the campaign to lower prices was based not on a well thought-out system of economic measures to lower the production cost of goods, but on purely administrative pressure applied to economic organizations.

A policy of lowering selling prices that is more considerate of market conditions, more flexible, and more individualized, i.e., that takes into account the position of each commodity in the market, can retain in the hands of state industry enormous sums that are now nourishing private capital and merchant parasitism in general.¹⁹

The Opposition stressed that printing more money as a means of reducing the budget deficit was increasing the shortage of industrial goods that could be offered in exchange for goods in the countryside. Without the possibility of turning the money they had into goods, the peasantry — especially its more prosperous layer — was reducing the sale of its agricultural products. This was leading to a spontaneous growth of prices on agricultural goods in private trade, as well as an increase of dead [unused] grain stocks among the prosperous peasants. The shortage of industrial goods resulting from the slow development of industry, the accumulation of kulak surpluses facilitated by an incorrect tax policy, and the excessive printing of paper money — these were the deciding factors that caused recurring difficulties in the stockpiling of raw goods and grain. The depletion of stockpiles in its turn caused further food supply and export-import difficulties: bread lines in the cities, the disruption of

plans for export, and consequently for import, and thus for the overall tempo of industrialization.

As a way out of this vicious circle, and as a means of closing the budget deficit and establishing the unconditional stability of the monetary unit, the Opposition proposed a flexible financial policy which utilized basic economic levers (taxes, pricing, credit, etc.) for the purpose of redistributing the national income, which would secure a more rapid industrialization, reduce unemployment and liquidate the shortages of goods. The Opposition proposed to lower the percentage of indirect taxes (such as sales taxes) levied for tax revenue, while gradually and systematically replacing indirect taxes with direct taxes, which would place a greater burden on the capitalist layers of the city and countryside. Increased taxes on the super-profits of private enterprises, together with the “squeezing of the monstrous bureaucratic apparatus,” would allow for a faster development of industry.

While calling for basically retaining the economic mechanisms of the NEP, the Opposition demanded more planning in the management of the national economy and greater use of economic methods to limit the accumulation of private capital.

1. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Новая экономическая политика Советской России и перспективы мировой революции*, М., 1923, С. 19 [Leon Trotsky, *The New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia and Prospects of World Revolution*, Moscow, 1923, p. 19; Cf. Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 2, New Park Publications, 1974, p. 233].

2. *Двенадцатый съезд РКП(б)*. Стенографический отчет, 1968. С. 676 [Twelfth Congress of the RCP(b), 1968, p. 676].

3. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Задачи XII съезда РКП(б)*, М., 1923, С. 12 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *Tasks Before the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party*, New Park Publications, 1975, p. 12].

4. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Восемь лет: итоги и перспективы*, Л., 1926, С. 18 [Leon Trotsky, *Eight Years: Results and Prospects*, Leningrad, 1926, p. 18].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *К социализму или к капитализму*, Издание второе, М.–Л., 1926, С. 4 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism?*, New Park Publications, 1976, p. 4].

6. Там же, С. 6 [Ibid., p. 6].

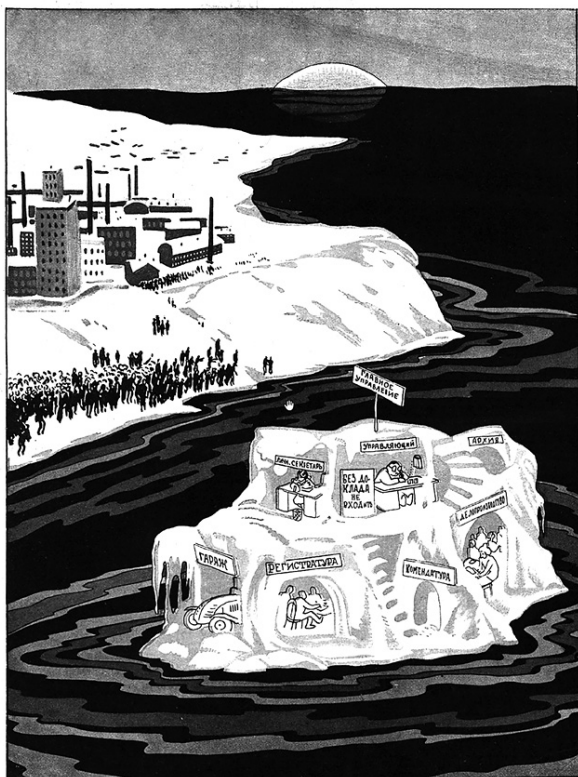
7. Там же [Ibid.].

8. Там же, С. 46 [Ibid., p. 42].

- [9.](#) Пятнадцатая конференция ВКП(б), С. 507 [*Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b)*, p. 507].
- [10.](#) Правда, 1927, 5 ноября [*Pravda*, 5 November 1927].
- [11.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [12.](#) Правда, 1927, 12 августа [*Pravda*, 12 August 1927].
- [13.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 8, С. 291 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 8, p. 304].
- [14.](#) Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР, Т. 1, С. 108–109 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 1, pp. 108–109].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 158 [*Ibid.*, p. 158].
- [16.](#) Там же, С. 218 [*Ibid.*, p. 218].
- [17.](#) Правда, 1927, 17 ноября [*Pravda*, 17 November 1927].
- [18.](#) Сталин, И. В., Сочинения, Т. 10, С. 232–233 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, p. 237–238].
- [19.](#) Правда, 1927, 17 ноября [*Pravda*, 17 November 1927].

ПОРА ПОКОНЧИТЬ С БЮРОКРАТИЗМОМ.

Рис. К. ЕЛИСЕЕВА.



Ледина, оторвавшаяся от масс...

"Time to Put an End to Bureaucratism!"

Several bureaucratic institutions depicted as an ice floe that has broken away from the masses. From the journal *Prozhektor*, 31 January 1927.

44. The Proletariat “Is Being Squeezed”

In the documents outlining its program, the Opposition pointed out that the strengthening of the kulak, the Nepman, and the bureaucrat was inevitable under the NEP. These forces could be weakened not by some kind of administrative action or by simple economic pressure, but rather by introducing a planning policy aimed at strengthening the socialist sector of the national economy and by fighting against bureaucratism.

In opposition to this approach, the ruling faction exercised a policy of unprincipled wavering, which in the end impeded industrialization and created the conditions in which the cooperatives served the interests of the “strong peasant,” who was striving for capitalist-farmer accumulation. The resultant growth — both absolute and relative — of capitalism in the countryside increased the dependence of the state on the raw material and export resources of the prosperous kulak elements. In addition, the incessant growth of the bureaucratization of both the party and the state apparatus more and more transformed the “bureaucratic distortions” of the Soviet state — of which Lenin had spoken — into a system of management. The swollen and privileged bureaucratic apparatus devoured an ever greater part of the surplus value created within state enterprises. The factory administrations increasingly strove to establish their unlimited power over workers. The processes of bureaucratic degeneration seized the trade unions, too, as a result of which their independence within state enterprises was replaced by agreement

between the factory director, the secretary of the party cell, and the chair of the factory trade union committee. Among those elected to the leading trade union organs, the portion of factory workers, especially non-party workers, was 12 to 13 percent. The overwhelming majority of delegates to trade union congresses consisted of individuals who had long since left the factory.

Examining the interrelated status of the various classes and social groups in Soviet society, the “Platform of Bolsheviks-Leninists” noted that the real wages of workers in 1927

... stands, at best, at the same level as in the fall of 1925. Meanwhile, it is unquestionable that over these two years the country has grown richer, the overall national income has risen, the kulaks at the top in the country have increased their surpluses with enormous rapidity, and the savings of the private capitalist, merchant, and speculator have grown extraordinarily. It is clear that the workers’ share of the overall national income has fallen as the share of the other classes has grown. This fact is extremely important for an evaluation of the situation in its entirety.”¹

Describing the class base on which the ruling faction rested in the implementation of its political line, Trotsky said:

What does your course consist of? You are counting on the strong farmer, and not on the hired worker, not on the poor peasant. You are directing your course toward the bureaucrat, the functionary, and not the masses. You place too much faith in the apparatus. Within the apparatus there is enormous internal support for each other and mutual insurance for yourselves — this is why Ordzhonikidze (at that time chair of the CCC and Rabkrin – V. R.) cannot even reduce staff. Independence from the masses creates a system of mutual concealment. And this is considered to be the main prop of power.²



Working-class family

The natural continuation of removing the working class from the management of government and transforming this management into a monopoly of bureaucratism was the activity of the party regime, which was stifling, shackling, and suffocating the party. In this connection, Trotsky used a graphic expression: “You think you will actually place a muzzle on the party?”³

In order to alter the economic and political situation in the country, the Opposition proposed to improve the material position of the working class and increase its role in the management of society and industry. Formulating the political tasks in the area of wages, the Opposition proceeded from the fact that, at a given stage of industrial development, a wage increase for workers, although modest, should be the precondition for a rise in labor productivity. At the same time the Opposition demanded a clear demarcation of the growth in labor productivity as the result of technological progress, more efficient methods of productions, new inventions, etc. They also demanded a limitation of the growth in labor intensity as the consequence of increased “pressure on the muscles and nerves of the worker.” The Opposition insisted that the ruling faction

was making wage increases specifically dependent on the intensity of labor, and this was leading to the exhaustion and disablement of workers.



Workers in a dormitory

The problem of low wages, which failed to rise at the same rate as labor productivity, was compounded by family budgets that were impacted by the rapidly growing consumption of alcohol. As a result of the slow tempo of industrialization, and because of agrarian overpopulation, which dumped thousands of new workers into the cities annually, unemployment grew and began to affect even the basic cadres of the industrial proletariat. According to the statistics of Gosplan, by the beginning of 1927, the number of unemployed workers numbered 2,275,000 (including 600,000 seasonal workers). Finally, the average provision of housing for workers' families was significantly lower than for other groups of the urban population.

All these figures testified to a clear drop in the living standard of workers. At the same time, the political situation of the working class, which was expected to play the leading political role in Soviet society, was no less unfavorable. Pointing out that at no time after the October Revolution had the trade unions and working masses stood at such a

distance from the management of industry as now, the Opposition stated that “the dissatisfaction of the worker, not finding a solution in the trade unions, is becoming ever deeper.” In support of this assertion, it referred to a typical complaint of the workers: “We’re not allowed to be particularly active; if you want a piece of bread, you have to keep your mouth shut.”⁴

Linking these facts to the toughening of the party regime, Trotsky said in June 1927:

Just as in the housing question, so in everyday life, in literature, in theater and in politics — the non-proletarian classes are expanding, getting elbow room, while the proletariat is being squeezed and is shrinking ... *our party regime strengthens this class shrinkage of the proletariat.*⁵

In response to all the declarations of the Opposition about the indifference of the bureaucracy to issues concerning the improvement of the everyday life of the working class and the strengthening of its political role, the leaders of the ruling faction responded with demagogic declarations that the working class possessed state power and that the party was wielding power in the name of the working class. In a response prior to the Fourteenth Party Congress to the demands of the “New Opposition” to bring the working class closer to the state, that is, to increase its role in the management of the country, Molotov said:

Our state is a workers’ state. ... But here we are being served formulaic advice to “bring the working class closer to the state.” ... What is this? We are supposed to place before ourselves the task of bringing workers closer to our state — but whose state is it? Is it not a workers’ state? Is the state really not proletarian? How can you bring the workers themselves to the state, that is, to the working class, which now holds power and manages the state?⁶

Trotsky described Molotov’s scholastic and apologetic reasoning as bureaucratic fetishism, the most dull-witted criticism of “the Leninist conception of a given workers’ state, which can become genuinely and thoroughly proletarian only through the enormous work of criticism, correction, and improvement ...”

Our criticism should be directed toward arousing in the worker’s consciousness his awareness of the impending danger, so that he does not

think that power has been attained once and for all time; and that the Soviet government is some kind of absolute under any conditions, that it is always a workers' government under any set of conditions. The proletariat must understand that in a certain historical period, especially in times of an incorrect policy of the leadership, the Soviet state may become an apparatus through which power may be shifted from the proletarian base.”⁷

Trotsky focused attention on the possibility that such a shift might logically lead to Bonapartism.

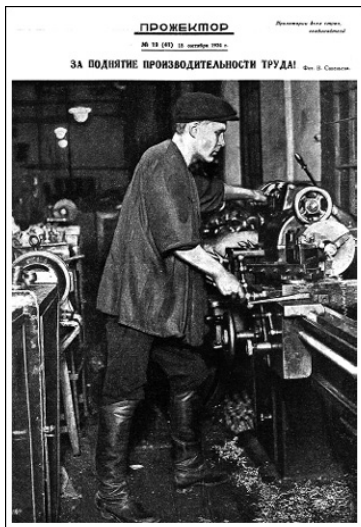
In order to correct the Stalin-Bukharin policy, which was leading to a “squeezing” of the working class, the Opposition advanced a program not only for the improvement of its material standard of living, but also for bringing closer together the wages of different layers of workers “by means of a systematic raising of the lower-paid layers, but not at the expense of lowering the higher-paid groups.”⁸ The Opposition demanded:

... to reconsider the entire system of labor statistics, which in its present form gives an incorrect, clearly colored impression of the economic and everyday situation of the working class, and thereby greatly hinders the work of defending the economic and everyday interests of the working class.⁹

The Opposition emphasized the danger of an increasing social differentiation in Soviet society, including within the working class, as a result of the growing influence of market mechanisms and the growth of bureaucratism. It proposed to neutralize these processes by introducing a policy of raising and systematically equalizing wages; by liquidating unemployment through accelerating industrialization; by developing democracy in the sphere of production, which would allow for the establishment of true workers' control over the management of the economy.

In the sphere of industrial democracy and activity of the trade unions, the Opposition demanded securing a majority for workers who were directly involved in production at trade union congresses (including the All-Union Congress) and in all the elected trade union organs, including the VTsSPS, or All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions; they also called for an increase in the percentage of non-party workers in these

organs to no less than one-third. Finally, the Opposition demanded to introduce into the criminal code an article intended to punish “any serious persecution by the state — or any concealed persecution — of a worker for criticism, for an independent proposal or for voting.”¹⁰



Raise the Productivity of Labor!

These theses and proposals by the Opposition were interpreted by the ruling faction as if the Opposition were calling for going from the dictatorship of the proletariat to bourgeois democracy. Particular zeal in such charges against the Opposition was expressed by Bukharin, whose views in the mid-1920s moved significantly away from the position he had defended during the first years of the Revolution. In *The ABC of Communism*, for example, he had spoken of the danger of “a reemergence of bureaucratism within the Soviet structure,” which could be avoided only “by the gradual introduction of every member of the entire working populace into the management of the country”;¹¹ however, when the Opposition focused its attention not merely on the abstract possibility but rather on the concrete manifestations of bureaucratic degeneration of the workers’ state, Bukharin in his factional blindness charged the Opposition with attempting to overthrow Soviet power. He declared in 1927:

We believe, in our mental simplicity, that our party is the proletarian vanguard, but it turns out that it is a bureaucratic clique that has completely torn itself away from the masses. We believe that Soviet power exists in our country as a form of dictatorship of the proletariat, but it turns out that what we have is far from a proletarian state, but rather one led by a completely degenerated caste. If we continue to follow the logic of these things, then we

must arrive, sooner or later, at the idea of overthrowing Soviet power — nothing more, nothing less.¹²

A year later, when Bukharin himself had turned up in an “opposition,” he returned to his positions of the first post-revolutionary years. His works of 1925–1927, however, made no small contribution to the establishment and consolidation of the apologetic thesis which claimed that the “leading role of the working class” had supposedly already been achieved. This thesis concealed the economic and political suppression of the working class by the bureaucratic caste.

1. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 113 [Cf. *The Platform of the Joint Opposition* (1927), New Park Publications, 1973, pp. 5–6].

2. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 163 [Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp. 125–126].

3. *Партия и оппозиция по документам*, Выпуск 1, 1927, С. 9 [*The Party and the Opposition. Documents*, Volume 1, 1927, p. 9].

4. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 121 [Cf. *The Platform of the Joint Opposition* (1927), p. 19].

5. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 146 [Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp. 110–111].

6. Там же, С. 144–145 [Ibid., p. 110].

7. Там же, С. 145–146 [Ibid., pp. 110–111].

8. *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 122 [Cf. *The Platform of the Joint Opposition* (1927), p. 20].

9. Там же, С. 124 [Ibid., p. 24].

10. Там же [Ibid.].

11. Бухарин, Н., Е. Преображенский, *Азбука коммунизма*, М., 1920, С. 148–149 [Cf. Bukharin & Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, edited by E. H. Carr, Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 238–239].

12. *Партия и оппозиция по документам*, Выпуск 1, С. 61 [*The Party and the Opposition. Documents*, Volume 1, p. 61].

45. Methods of Struggle against the Opposition

From the standpoint of the prosperous villager and the urban inhabitant, 1926 and 1927 — the final years of the NEP — were a time of the greatest tranquility and civil peace in the country. They were far from peaceful, however, for the party, in which a fierce internal war was raging. In this struggle, the ruling bloc utilized the most embittered ideological and political means and, eventually, direct police repression against the dissenters.

The very character of the inner-party struggle objectively lowered the authority of the party in the eyes of the non-party masses. Moreover, the public “mud slinging” by the ruling faction against its opponents revived the hopes of the petty-bourgeois and intermediate layers (beginning with Nepman and kulak elements and ending with that part of the intelligentsia which from the very beginning had not accepted the October Revolution) for a split and weakening of the party.

In addition, Stalin’s “liberal” policy in the socioeconomic sphere allowed him to secure a solid base in the country in order to carry out his primary goal at this stage — the organized rout of the Left Opposition and, as its consequence, the complete suppression of freedom of party opinion. Speaking as a supporter of “civil peace” in the country, Stalin showed ever greater cruelty in his persecution of the Opposition and in the further suppression of inner-party democracy. Having placed all aspects and spheres of party life under his full control, Stalin began with

increasing frequency to violate the statutory demands for electoral processes, the accountability of the apparatus to the electoral organs and party organizations, and democratic centralism, which he replaced with bureaucratic centralism. The length of time between party congresses and CC plenums began to increase more and more, while these forums themselves were transformed into merciless and cynical means of persecuting the Opposition, and were then followed by ever-crueler organizational measures. Coarseness and disloyalty came to be the personal qualities not only of Stalin, but also defining characteristics of the party leadership.

The entire period of struggle against the Left Opposition was marked by a decrease in access to information, which moved from the top down, and the establishment of ever stricter secrecy when it came to the most important party documents. Violation of these policies led to official sanctions by the GPU. In 1924, an Orgburo resolution was passed, which declared that “any comrade who has received conspiratorial documents is forbidden to circulate them or acquaint anyone else with them.” Resolutions of the Orgburo adopted in 1925 limited the circle of individuals who were allowed to see secret documents and indicated:

Persons who violate secrecy (the disclosure, loss of or negligent circulation of secret documents) must answer out of court to the OGPU. All officials in the departments of the CC coming into contact with secret materials or having access to secret work are generally appointed and accounted for by a special department of the OGPU through the secret section of the CC.

In 1927, the Politburo passed a resolution indicating that “secret cases should be known only to those who absolutely must know.” On the basis of this resolution, new limitations were placed on access to such “cases.”¹ All of this made it easier for a narrow circle of apparatchiks to conspire ever more against their own party as they deprived mainly Oppositionists of information about bureaucratic machinations and falsifications.

The last of the legal oppositions was routed with comparative ease, because the ruling faction throughout the entire duration of the inner-party struggle carried out an intense campaign to bring masses of new

members into the party, despite Lenin's warnings of the danger posed by an extreme growth in membership.

Beginning in 1923, the party was artificially dissolving itself in the relatively raw and inexperienced masses, who were called upon to play the role of submissive material in the hands of professionals in the apparatus. This watering down of the party's revolutionary core was a prerequisite for the victories of the apparatus over Trotskyism.²

By the Twelfth Party Congress, party membership equalled 386,000 members and 99,000 candidate-members. By the Thirteenth Congress, membership had risen to 736,000, with 128,000 candidates. At the Fourteenth, there were 643,000 members and 445,000 candidates. The Fifteenth Congress counted 887,000 members and 349,000 candidates. In addition, the social composition of the party had changed. Between the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Party Congresses, the number of members who were workers by social origin decreased from 58.1 to 56.3 percent, while the percentage of factory workers, from 40.8 percent to 37.5 percent. One-tenth of industrial workers who had been accepted into the party between 1924 and 1926 had left the party by the Fifteenth Congress [1927], or had been expelled.

The composition of the lower party officials also changed radically. By the Fifteenth Congress, 90 percent of the secretaries and bureau members from the primary party cells within industry had joined the party after 1924. It is understandable that, among the new members of the party who had joined during the heat of the bitter party discussions and frenzied persecution of the Opposition, an erosion of the old party traditions occurred. Because of the influx into the party of many new members possessing minimal political experience and a poor understanding of its theory and history, the several thousand communists who dared to speak in support of the Opposition, to sign its documents and vote for them, appeared to be an insignificant number. At a time when the split of the old party guard reached its culmination, Stalin continued to insist stubbornly that there could be no talk of a party split, since the overwhelming majority of its members voted for "the CC line."

In the course of the struggle against the United Opposition, the throttle was opened on the powerful propaganda machine which churned out thousands of newspaper and journal articles and hundreds of brochures and books that distorted the statements of the Opposition's leaders and its documents. The majority of Communists were forced to see these statements and documents merely in the form of excerpts that had been torn out of context and thoroughly abridged or accompanied by coarsely tendentious commentary. Even in the collection "The Party and the Opposition in Documents," published by the CC Agitprop before the Fifteenth Congress (under the heading "Top Secret," "Only for Members of the VKP(b)," "Reproduction is Prohibited"), the excerpts from Opposition documents and speeches by its leaders were presented in an extremely truncated form.

In the "theoretical" struggle against the Opposition, the attempt to separate Leninism from "Trotskyism" continued to play the leading role. In his speech at the Fifteenth Party Conference, Trotsky described the clumsy ideological tricks to which the creators of this scheme would have to resort:

The following quotation charges me with the following: "at a time when Ilyich said: 'ten to twenty years of correct relations with the peasantry would secure a victory on a world scale,' Trotskyism, on the contrary, claims that there can be no correct relations between the proletariat and the peasantry before the victory of the world revolution." What does this quote mean, first of all, I ask ... It means that I am establishing a law according to which the most incorrect relations with the peasantry as possible must be established before the victory of the world revolution. (Laughter). Comrades, it is obvious that it was not intended to express this point here, simply because this phrase makes no sense at all.³

Nevertheless, the absurd passage ridiculed by Trotsky was entered — with merely an insignificant editorial change — into the conference resolution.

Any concrete proposals by the Opposition regarding the ways and methods of solving socioeconomic problems were invariably depicted in official propaganda as expressions of notorious "Trotskyism." This could not fail to create an atmosphere of uneasiness and extreme hostility

between the opposing sides. Stalin, in fact, encouraged such an atmosphere, since it intensified the animosity of the party masses and, in particular, the party functionaries, toward the recalcitrant minority.

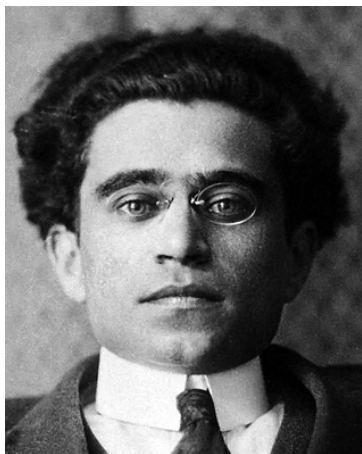
The refusal to take advantage of the creative potential of discussions was facilitated by the fact that Stalin and his supporters eagerly stirred up disputes over questions of a secondary or scholastic character, such as the interpretation of separate quotations, a persistent return to the mistakes of the Opposition's leaders before the revolution, etc. Moreover, matters were depicted in such a way that even the interpretation of deeply theoretical questions in official documents was to be construed as a political resolution demanding submission as a matter of party discipline. Thus, at the August 1927 Plenum of the CC, Stalin referred to the "resolutions" passed at the Fifteenth Party Conference and the Seventh Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern "on the possibility of the victory of socialism in the USSR," and demanded that the Opposition "acknowledge the correctness of those *decisions* by the highest authorities of our party and the Comintern ..."

(my italics – V. R.).⁴ While following a consistent line toward a split with the Left Opposition in the VKP(b) and the groups supporting it in other Communist parties, the ruling faction ignored all the warnings of foreign communists that this split would be a blow to the communist movement and would serve the interests of reactionary forces.

Warnings of this nature were contained in a letter to the Central Committee VKP(b) from Antonio Gramsci on behalf of the Politburo of the Italian Communist Party in October 1926. Pointing to the impending split among the leaders of the VKP(b) and Comintern — leaders who had worked together with Lenin — Gramsci appealed to the CC majority in the VKP(b) with a request that it not attempt to abuse its victory in the struggle but demonstrate, instead, its willingness to avoid extreme measures. Gramsci wrote:

Comrades, over the course of ten years of world history, you have been the organizational and inspirational factor for revolutionary forces of all lands. The role you have played and are still playing has no equivalent, in terms of depth and scope, in human history. But today you are destroying what you

have built; you are degrading and threatening to undermine the leading role of the party of the USSR. That which was achieved thanks to the inspiring push given by Lenin ... Comrades Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev have made a large contribution to our revolutionary education; more than once they have energetically and sternly corrected us, and therefore we consider them among our teachers ... The damage resulting from a split, or the prolonged period of a ripening split, could prove irreparable and fatal.⁵



Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937)



Palmiro Togliatti (1893–1964)

Instead of delivering Gramsci's letter as instructed, Togliatti wrote a letter back to Gramsci expressing his objections to the latter's depiction of the CC majority and minority as "equal sides." Togliatti also objected to Gramsci's suggestion that the CC majority of the Russian Communist Party might be acting unfairly, and finally, that Gramsci was issuing a warning to them. Gramsci answered Togliatti with an angry letter. Only after this, Togliatti delivered Gramsci's letter to Bukharin. Soon thereafter, the Presidium of the ECCI sent its representative, Humbert-Droz, to Italy for the purpose of convincing Gramsci to recall his document. However, the meeting between Humbert-Droz and Gramsci did not take place, because the latter had been arrested. A number of Italian communist historians believe, on the basis of documentary

evidence, that Comintern agents may have assisted in Gramsci's arrest, particularly since the leadership of the Comintern was interested in removing Gramsci from active political work.⁶



Vasil Petrov Kolarov (1877–1950)

had not been shown to a single foreign member in the Comintern leadership. In response, Stalin proposed to postpone the discussion of this question by a day in order to inform the Italians. The role of “informer” was entrusted to Kolarov, who had been elected general secretary of the ECCI in 1924 for the zeal he had displayed in “the struggle against Trotskyism.” Kolarov cynically declared to the Italians:

We are not seeking historical truth; rather, we are merely verifying the fact that there is a struggle between two groups ... for power in the Politburo. In this struggle, power is on the side of Stalin, and that is why we support Stalin, and not Trotsky.⁷

Soon afterward, Silone was expelled from the ECCI, and Togliatti passed over once and for all to the side of the duumvirate (then in 1928, after much hesitation, he took Stalin's side in the struggle against Bukharin). Continuing in the future to express unreserved support for all of Stalin's crimes, Togliatti remained one of the few veterans of the Comintern to remain in its leadership right up to its dissolution in 1943.⁸ These facts vividly reveal

the situation that had developed in the Comintern by the mid-1920s, which Trotsky characterized in the following manner in a letter on behalf of the delegation of the VKP(b) to the ECCI on 28 June 1926:

The selection of leading elements in Communist Parties occurred and is occurring mainly from the standpoint of their willingness to approve the most recent grouping of the apparatus in the VKP(b). The more independent and responsible of the leading elements of foreign parties, who do not agree to subject themselves to the purely administrative shuffling, are either thrown out of the party as a whole, or forced into its right — often quasi-right — wing, or, finally, fall into the Opposition on the left.²



Ignazio Silone (1900–1978)

The main share of the responsibility for using dishonest and provocative methods in the struggle against the Opposition was shared by Stalin and the Politburo majority, which was moving ever further along the path of political and moral degeneration. Recalling that under Lenin, an “atmosphere of mountain heights” had prevailed in the party and its leadership, Trotsky wrote:

Lenin left the CC, and in the Politburo everyone united against one individual. People began to change. The best qualities receded somewhere into the background. Into the foreground emerged those qualities which had been carefully concealed, or which had not yet developed. Nevertheless, as long as the personnel in the Politburo remained as before, recollections of the past bound people together and limited their actions against one another.¹⁰

The bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev restrained Stalin. After all, they had passed through Lenin’s lengthy school and they had valued the idea and the program; and although they had permitted themselves, under guise of warlike cunning, to deviate monstrously from the program and violate the ideological line — nevertheless, all of this had been done within certain limits. The split with the troika removed ideological restraints from Stalin.¹¹ In the Politburo,

members completely ceased to be embarrassed by their ignorance. Argument lost its force ...¹²

After the breakup of the troika, the Politburo was filled by random individuals notable only for their readiness to support Stalin against others. Utterly alien moods invaded the Politburo; newcomers competed with one another in displaying their hostility toward the Opposition, in their readiness to support every step of the “leader,” and in their striving to surpass one another in rudeness. To people like Voroshilov, Rudzutak, and Mikoyan, who formerly had venerated the CC and Politburo, it now seemed that it had all been a myth, as soon as they could feel themselves to be masters of the Politburo. Nothing remained of the atmosphere of mountain heights.¹³



Rykov, Stalin, and Bukharin

The last members of Lenin’s Politburo who remained in the ranks of the ruling faction — Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy — were particularly active in the unbridled mockery and persecution of the Opposition. Their speeches and articles of 1926–1927 demonstrated their ever-greater loss of all moral scruples. Typical in this regard was Bukharin’s speech at the Fifteenth Party Conference, which Stalin repeatedly interrupted with shouts of encouragement. Stalin and his supporters gave special approval to the following cynical passage from Bukharin’s speech:

Comrade Zinoviev described ... how well Ilyich had treated the Opposition, by not expelling everyone when he had only two votes at a professional meeting. Ilyich understood well: How can I expel everyone when I have only two votes? (Laughter). And now, when we have everyone on our side with only two votes against us, and these two votes are shouting about Thermidor — just think about it.” (Shouts: “That’s right.” Applause, laughter. Stalin from his seat: “Good work, Bukharin, good work. He doesn’t speak — but cuts them to pieces”).¹⁴

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1. *Правда*, 1991, 7 октября [*Pravda*, 7 October 1991].
 2. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. II, С. 213 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 535].
 3. Пятнадцатая конференция ВКП(б), С. 521 [*Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b)*, p. 521; Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, p. 149].
 4. Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 71 [Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, p. 75].
 5. *Полис*, 1991, № 1, С. 161 [*Polis*, 1991, № 1, p. 161].
 6. Там же, С. 161–162 [*Ibid.*, pp. 161–162].
 7. Авторханов, А., *Технология власти*, С. 194 [A. Avtorkhanov, *Technology of Power*, p. 194].
 8. After the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, Togliatti published several articles in which he raised the question of “certain forms of degeneration” in Soviet society, and placed responsibility for this not only on Stalin, but on his closest circle in the VKP(b). If Togliatti had been more honest and consistent, he should have acknowledged his own share of the guilt for the analogous process of degeneration in the international communist movement.
 9. *Коммунист*, 1991, № 7, С. 93 [*Communist*, 1991, № 7, p. 93].
 10. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. II, С. 248 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 529].
 11. Там же. С. 248–249 [Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 565].
 12. Там же, С. 249 [Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 548].
 13. Там же, С. 249–250 [Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 549].
 14. Пятнадцатая конференция ВКП(б), С. 601 [*Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b)*, p. 601].

46. The Final Stage of the Legal Struggle

After July 1926, when the sharp differences between the ruling faction and the Left Opposition were fully revealed, Trotsky once and for all abandoned the policy of “rotten compromises.” In his speeches at plenums of the CC and CCC, and in his letters to these bodies, Trotsky named by name the main enemy of the party and the revolution, and directly charged him with usurping the power of the party.

Trotsky’s revelations, like those of other Opposition leaders, for the most part became known to the party not in their entirety (since the Oppositionists were forbidden to publish their documents, express their “factional” views at party cell meetings, etc.), but in the form of partial quotations, accompanied by the tendentious commentary of ideologues in the ruling faction. Yaroslavsky, for instance, referred at the Fifteenth Party Conference to Trotsky’s statement that “there is no Central Committee, but there is Stalin’s faction.” He linked this statement with the fact that the question of Stalin was “the focal point of the entire attack” by the Opposition. Yaroslavsky indignantly added that “in the recent period, comrade Trotsky has very often liked to tell the CC: ‘you are replacing a poverty of ideas with bureaucratic omnipotence.’”¹

At one of the sessions of the Politburo, Trotsky declared that “Stalin has made himself a candidate for grave-digger of our party and the revolution.” Uglanov called this statement “a desecration of our party

leadership.”² Referring to Trotsky’s statement, Bukharin indignantly declared:

Was it said or not that we are experiencing a bureaucratic degeneration at the top, where a caste, isolated from the masses, has formed? ... Did Comrade Trotsky say from this very tribune that the party apparatus and the leading circles of the party have seized the entire party by the throat? He did say it.³

In the fall of 1926, the Opposition made the first attempt to present an open, detailed explanation of its views at party meetings.

The apparatus repulsed us violently. The ideological struggle was replaced by the administrative mechanism: calling the party bureaucracy by telephone to meetings of workers’ cells; the mad assembly of automobiles with honking horns; well-organized whistling and roaring during the appearances of Oppositionists at the tribune. The ruling faction exerted pressure through the mechanical concentration of its forces and by the threat of repression. Before the party masses were able to hear, understand, or say anything, they grew fearful of a split and a catastrophe.⁴

Under these conditions, the Opposition issued a statement on 16 October, signed by Zinoviev, Kamenev, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Trotsky, and Yevdokimov. The statement explained essentially that the leaders of the Opposition, considering their views to be correct and reserving for themselves the right to struggle for them within the party framework, refused to defend their views by factional methods and called upon all of their comrades who shared their views to do the same. At the same time, the statement noted:

In the course of recent months, a number of comrades have been expelled from the party for one or another set of violations of party discipline and for their use of factional methods in the struggle for the views of the Opposition ... We express our firm hope that the Opposition’s virtual surrender of the factional struggle will open the possibility for the expelled comrades, who have admitted their mistakes in the violation of party discipline and the interests of party unity, to return to the party ranks.⁵

In spite of this important step on the part of the Opposition, the October 1926 Plenum of the CC and CCC issued a warning to CC members Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Piatakov, Yevdokimov, Sokolnikov, Smilga, and CC candidate-member Nikolaeva for their “violation of

Party discipline.” Moreover, it removed Trotsky and Kamenev from their responsibilities as a Politburo member and a Politburo candidate-member, respectively, for “directing factional activity.” Finally, the October Plenum meeting declared the impossibility of “further work by comrade Zinoviev in the Communist International.” In fulfillment of this resolution, a month later the Sixth Expanded Plenum of the ECCI removed Zinoviev from his post as chair of the Comintern. Simultaneously with Zinoviev’s removal, the post of Comintern chair itself was eliminated and a new leading body within the Comintern was formed: the Political Secretariat, in which Bukharin began to play the leading role.

Kamenev was also removed from his leading posts (chair of the Moscow Soviet, deputy chair of Sovnarkom and chair of the Council of Labor and Defense). For a short time he was appointed Commissar of Foreign and Domestic Trade, then finally sent to Italy as an ambassador.

After the declaration of 16 October, the Opposition curtailed its factional activity for a time. Meanwhile, the apparatus continued to expel some Oppositionists from the party while forcing others to declare that they were leaving the Opposition. The most serious of such departures was that of Krupskaya, who refused to participate in the Opposition. This decision was preceded by her attempt to enter into negotiations with the Politburo majority for the purpose of softening the inner-party struggle. In his letter to Molotov on 16 September 1926, Stalin was sharply critical of this attempt and declared that “negotiations with Krupskaya are not only inappropriate *now*, but also politically harmful. Krupskaya is a splitter (see her speech on the Stockholm Congress).⁶ She needs to be beaten like a splitter.”⁷

Several months later, Krupskaya decided to announce publicly her break with the Opposition. In a letter published in *Pravda*, she explained that “the present moment demands the highest possible unity of action.” She wrote:

The broad peasant and working masses understood the Opposition’s statement to be directed against the basic principles of the Communist Party and Soviet power. Of course, this interpretation was fundamentally wrong;

however, the given fact eloquently speaks of the need for more restrained and comradely forms of debate. I feel that the party's self-criticism is extremely important; but I think that this self-criticism should not take the form of accusing one another of all the deadly sins. We need a professional, sober discussion of the questions at hand.⁸

In letters to Trotsky and Zinoviev, Krupskaya explained that “by using such factional methods of work, we are rushing headlong into what will be a different party.”⁹ In response to Krupskaya, Zinoviev noted:

Apart from your desires, which, of course, are good, in fact you will help Stalin, who is leading matters (by now at a feverish rate) to a split and to the expulsion from the party of those who are defending the cause of Ilyich ... I am certain that you will become convinced of this rather soon. But Stalin, meanwhile, will carry out his business ... Hardly a few weeks will pass, and you will see the logical end of Stalin's intentions. It is painfully regretful that *you* are actually making it easier for him to accomplish what Vladimir Ilyich so feared and against which he warned.¹⁰

Other than Krupskaya, no other leading Oppositionists declared that they were leaving before the Fifteenth Party Congress. Understanding clearly that Stalin was preparing an organizational rout of the Opposition, its main group approached the outcome with eyes wide open.

Trotsky, expelled from the Politburo, continued at plenums of the CC and ECCI to debunk Stalin's theoretical “discoveries” and dishonest tactics openly, often forcing the latter to take a defensive position and even to make self-demeaning statements. Thus at the Seventh Expanded Plenum of the ECCI (22 November–16 December 1926), Stalin announced that he had never “claimed to have made new discoveries in the realm of theory ...”¹¹

Led by Saponov and V. M. Smirnov, a group of Democratic Centralists — who, after the declaration of 16 October, would leave the Opposition bloc and criticize Trotsky and his supporters for not being strong enough in defending their convictions — spoke out even more sharply against Stalin and his faction. In a letter to the Central Control Commission, V. M. Smirnov declared:

The leading group among the CC leaders for all these years have fought against any discussion, while supplanting it with a new system of one-sided persecution of everyone who does not agree with them ... The Stalin faction ... with greater and greater frequency is employing the corrupting method of provocation in the party struggle ... This danger emanates no longer from Stalin alone, but from the entire Stalinist faction, which knows no other way to overcome disagreements except through repression and expulsion.¹²

The necessity of engaging in public polemics with the Oppositionists created a more urgent task for Stalin: to expel the Opposition leaders from the CC and the Comintern leadership and to deprive them fully of the ability to make any public statements. To solve this problem, the Stalin faction earnestly continued to utilize its favorite methods: to shift attention from essential differences to biographical facts about the Opposition leaders that supposedly discredited them. Thus, in response to Kamenev's criticism of the ruling faction's mistakes at a plenum of the ECCI, Stalin raised the defamatory rumor about Kamenev, which had first been circulated in bourgeois newspapers in 1917, but then immediately refuted by *Pravda*. Stalin declared:

The event took place in the city of Achinsk in 1917, after the February Revolution, where I was in exile together with comrade Kamenev. There was a banquet or a meeting, I don't remember exactly, and at one point during this meeting several citizens together with comrade Kamenev dispatched a telegram to Mikhail Romanov ... (Kamenev from his place in the audience: "Admit that you're lying! Admit it!"). Shut up, Kamenev. (Kamenev: "Are you going to admit that you're lying?"). Shut up, Kamenev, or else it will be worse. (Chairman Thälmann calls Kamenev to order.) The telegram to Romanov, as citizen number one in Russia, was sent by several merchants and comrade Kamenev. I found out about this on the next day from comrade Kamenev himself, who stopped by and confessed to me that he had done something foolish (Kamenev from his place: "You're lying, I never told you anything of the sort.") ... Since comrade Kamenev is trying rather weakly to refute what is a fact, allow me to collect signatures from those participants of the April Conference who insisted upon Kamenev's expulsion from the CC because of this telegram (Trotsky from his place: "You are missing only Lenin's signature"). Comrade Trotsky, you should shut up, too. (Trotsky: "Don't frighten me, don't frighten me ..."). You are going against the truth and you

should fear the truth. (Trotsky: “But this is Stalin’s brand of truth, which is rudeness and disloyalty”).^{13, 14}

The signatures of the April Conference were collected, however, not by Stalin, but by Kamenev. Thirteen former delegates to this conference categorically refuted both Stalin’s announcement as well as his insistence that the refutation of the incident in *Pravda* was printed only because “that was the only means of saving Kamenev and safeguarding the Party from enemy blows.”¹⁵ They also refuted Stalin’s statement that only Lenin, with Stalin’s help, had managed with difficulty to save Kamenev’s candidacy in elections to the CC. Members of the CC elected at the April Conference — Zinoviev, Smilga, and Fyodorov — wrote that “Every part of Stalin’s version ... is a lie from beginning to end.”¹⁶ In her statement, Krupskaya indicated that she “had never heard from Vladimir Ilyich — although he spoke to me of Kamenev more than once — about a telegram which supposedly had been sent to Mikhail Romanov by Kamenev. I know that Vladimir Ilyich would never have concealed such a thing, nor would have, of course, other members of the CC.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Politburo and CC Secretariat passed resolutions regarding these documents: “not to examine the statements made regarding this conflict; and not to fulfill Kamenev’s request to publish the documents he presented.”¹⁸

In June 1927 the ruling faction made a new attempt to punish the leaders of the Opposition organizationally. For this purpose they enlisted the services of the CCC, which had long ceased to fulfill the functions assigned to it by Lenin. A “case” was assigned to a session of the CCC, charging Trotsky and Zinoviev with “disorganizing behavior.” This was preceded by a CC resolution about “the speech of comrade Zinoviev at a non-Party meeting devoted to Press Day (May 9) in which he attacked the CC VKP(b) and its decisions (as well as *Pravda*).” The speech was declared to be “unheard of in the ranks of the VKP(b), completely inadmissible and intolerable, and in violation of all the requirements of Party discipline accepted by the Opposition, including comrade Zinoviev.”¹⁹ Trotsky was charged with a similar “crime”: delivering

“factional” speeches at a plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Finally, a third “crime” by the leaders of the Opposition was declared to be their participation in escorting CC member Smilga to the Yaroslavsky train station when the latter was sent to the Far East by the Central Committee as punishment for opposition activity.

At a June meeting of the CCC, Trotsky made two speeches in which he announced on behalf of the Opposition:

We will criticize Stalin’s regime until you shut our mouths by force. Until you place a gag in our mouths, we will criticize this Stalinist regime, which otherwise will undermine all the achievements of the October Revolution.²⁰

Having turned his speeches from a defensive weapon — as the Stalin faction preferred — into an offensive weapon and a merciless criticism of the unprincipled methods used in the struggle against the Opposition, Trotsky said:

At meetings, especially at workers’ and peasants’ cell meetings, they already say the devil-knows-what about the Opposition, and they ask what kind of “resources” are being used by the Opposition for its “work”; the workers, perhaps, are ignorant, unconscious, or perhaps they are sent by you to ask such questions and submit such Black Hundreds-like notes ... And there are scoundrels who dare in their speeches to answer these notes evasively. If you really were the CCC, then it would be your duty to stop this dirty, rotten, foul, purely Stalinist campaign against the Opposition.²¹

Trotsky’s reference to the Black Hundreds in his speech was not accidental. While trying publicly to not express his anti-Semitic inclinations, Stalin widely employed these feelings in the struggle against the Opposition. At the first stage of this struggle, when Stalin had formed an alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev, his “play on the strings of anti-Semitism was very cautious and concealed.”²² Only the more cynical agitators, trained personally by Stalin, declared at party meetings that Trotsky’s followers were the petty bourgeoisie from the “little towns” (that is, typically inhabited by Jews – V. R.), without directly uttering the word “Jew.” Even the factual basis of such assertions was false. The ranks of the Opposition at that time included mostly individuals of purely Russian descent: I. N. Smirnov, Serebriakov, Piatakov, Preobrazhensky,

Krestinsky, Muralov, Beloborodov, Mrachkovsky, Sapronov, Vrachev, V. M. Smirnov, and others. Trotsky's closest associate Rakovsky was Bulgarian, and another prominent Opposition leader, Smilga, was Latvian. Among active Oppositionists were also Georgian communists like Mdivani, Okudzhava, Tsintsadze, and Kavtaradze. Yet Stalin persistently emphasized Trotsky's "Jewishness" not only in "confidential" conversations with his followers, but even with Oppositionists. Thus he said to Piatakov and Preobrazhensky — as a meaningful "joke": "You are now coming out directly with an axe against the CC. This betrays your 'orthodox' work. Trotsky acts quietly, but you wield an axe." The motif of the "Jewishness" of Oppositionists was also latent on the pages of the press controlled by Stalin. Trotsky later recalled:

Both in the official trials of bribe-takers and other scoundrels, as well as in the expulsions of Oppositionists from the party, the bureaucracy readily moved coincidental and secondary Jewish names into the foreground. This was quite openly discussed in the party and, already by 1925, the Opposition saw in this circumstance the unmistakable symptom of the ruling layer's decay.²³

As was recounted to the author of this book by Ivan Iakovlevich Vrachev, the only former Trotskyist who survived to our days, the Oppositionists, irrespective of their nationality, perceived Stalin's anti-Semitic and chauvinistic tendencies with a feeling of profound indignation and disgust. They saw in them an unmistakable symptom of his break with the principles of Bolshevism.

The situation became even worse after Zinoviev and Kamenev broke with Stalin and united with the Left Opposition. Now official agitators at party and non-party meetings began to say that at the head of the Opposition stood three "dissatisfied Jewish members of the intelligentsia." This line was followed systematically and almost completely openly in Moscow under the leadership of the first Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee at the time, Uglanov, and also in Leningrad, under the leadership of Kirov.

In order to demonstrate more sharply to the workers the distinction between the "old" course and the "new," Jews ... were removed from important party and soviet posts. Not only in the countryside, but even in Moscow factories,

the persecution of the Opposition by 1926 often assumed a clearly anti-Semitic character.²⁴

Trotsky received hundreds of letters reporting the use anti-Semitic methods in the struggle against the Opposition. At first he hoped to win support against the use of such methods from Bukharin, who at the time he considered to be the most decent member of the Politburo. On 4 March 1926, Trotsky wrote a letter to Bukharin which began: "I am writing this letter by hand (although I've grown unaccustomed to it), because I am ashamed to dictate to a stenographer what I want to say." Citing examples of slanderous attacks against him at meetings of worker cells, Trotsky referred also to a letter he received from a worker whose party cell secretary had said: "There are Yids kicking up a row in the Politburo." When Trotsky attempted to verify this report, he discovered that several members of the cell had at first planned to write a letter of protest to the CC and CCC, but then refrained from doing so because they feared that "they will chase us from the factory, and they have families." The author of the letter that had been sent to Trotsky, a Jewish worker, also did not dare to write to party authorities about references to "Yids who are agitating against Leninism" for the reason that "if others, who are not Jewish, remain silent, then I feel awkward." Summarizing all these facts, Trotsky emphasized that "members of the Communist Party are afraid to report to party organs about Black-Hundreds agitation, feeling that they themselves, not the Black Hundreds, will be driven out."

Foreseeing that Bukharin might regard this interpretation of the question as an exaggeration, Trotsky proposed to travel together with him to a party cell and verify the given facts. He wrote:

I think that you and I, as two members of the Politburo, are still bound by something that is wholly sufficient that we may try to calmly and conscientiously find out: is it true, is it possible, that *in our party, in Moscow, in a workers' cell*, propaganda is being conducted which is vile and slanderous, on the one hand, and anti-Semitic, on the other, and it goes unpunished?²⁵

Bukharin, who himself was not prone to anti-Semitic sentiment (like the majority of Communists at that time), at first agreed to travel with Trotsky to verify this information, but Stalin forbade him to do so.

Trotsky's archive contains still another curious document: the protocol of a session at which a small group of party members, together with some Komsomol and non-party members, discussed the question "On the Opposition of Trotsky and Zinoviev." One of the participants at this meeting declared:

Trotsky cannot be a Communist — his nationality itself indicates that he needs to engage in speculation [profiteering]. I remember how once at a plenum, Zinoviev put Trotsky in his place, but, apparently, now he and Trotsky have become buddies. They misread the Russian spirit — the Russian worker and the peasant will not follow such NEP swine.²⁶

Evidently, Trotsky made known this Black Hundreds-like statement, which so strikingly contradicted the ideology of Bolshevism. This is borne out by evidence that Yaroslavsky, Stalin's main assistant in the "struggle against the Opposition," was forced at the Fifteenth Party Congress to quote the citation from this protocol that Trotsky, because of his Jewish background, "needed speculation." Typically, following the quote, a retort resounded from the audience: "There is political speculation, of course." Yaroslavsky, who hurried to declare that it was impermissible "for a Communist to give such explanations," affirmed nonetheless that the Opposition was devoting to the question of anti-Semitism "overly morbid attention, blowing it out of proportion and trying to present matters in such a way that anti-Semitism is supposedly a *method* of struggle against the Opposition ... This is ... the poisonous weapon of dishonest slander."²⁷

Meanwhile, in the latter half of 1927, when the expulsion of Oppositionists from the party was being prepared, anti-Semitic agitation against the Opposition assumed an utterly unbridled character. The slogan "Beat the Opposition" was often embellished with the traditional slogan, "Beat the Jews, Save Russia." Trotsky recalled:

The situation went so far that Stalin was forced to publish a statement which read: "We are struggling against Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, not because they are Jews, but because they are Oppositionists, and the like." It was utterly clear to any politically-minded individual that this consciously ambiguous announcement, directed against the "excesses" of anti-Semitism, at the same time deliberately inflamed it. "Don't forget that the leaders of the Opposition

are Jews” — such was the *meaning* of Stalin’s statement, which was published in all the Soviet newspapers.^{[28](#)}

A meeting of the Central Control Commission in June 1927, which considered the task of expelling Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party, reached no decision. The question had not yet been fully prepared.

After the CCC meeting, the unparalleled persecution of the Opposition resumed with new strength — this time in connection with the collection of signatures on the “Declaration of the 83,” which referred to the number of individuals who presented the document to the CC on 25 May 1927. One month later, another document, signed by the “Democratic Centralists,” appeared among the inner-party internal documents. This document, which became known as the “Declaration of the Fifteen,” concluded with the following words:

The inner-party regime, which is stifling the activity of the working-class portion of the party; tearing the party away from the masses of the working class; contributing to the degeneration of the top layer of the party; and threatening to liquidate the party as the vanguard of the proletariat, having transformed it into an auxiliary organ of state power — all this demonstrates that the present leaders of the CC are approaching the utmost limits of abandoning proletarian positions.^{[29](#)}

Addressing the campaign to gather signatures on Opposition documents, an editorial article in *Pravda* entitled “The Path of the Opposition” described the “fabrication and circulation (by the Opposition) of all possible ‘documents,’ which are difficult to distinguish from the documents of the enemy.” The article also declared the Opposition’s alliance with “Chamberlain’s stooges.”^{[30](#)}

With charges such as these in mind, Trotsky affirmed in a letter to Ordzhonikidze on 11 June 1927:

If someone says that the political line of ignorant and unscrupulous cheaters should be disposed of like garbage precisely in the interests of the victory of the workers’ state, then he will certainly not become a “defeatist” because of it.”^{[31](#)}

In support of this statement, Trotsky put forward the historical analogy that in the future would be called the “thesis on Clemenceau.” He

recalled that during the First World War, the French politician Clemenceau, who was in opposition to his government, carried out a furious struggle against its indecisiveness, until he eventually led his group to power. With his more consistent policy he secured a victory for France in the war.

These statements were read aloud by Stalin in his speech “The International Situation and the Defense of the USSR,” which he delivered on 1 August 1927 at a joint plenum of the CC and CCC. This plenum had been called to consider the question of expelling the Oppositionists from higher party bodies. In order to achieve this goal, Stalin interlaced the question of the Opposition with the question of military danger by declaring that the “thesis on Clemenceau” expressed the Opposition’s intention to seize power by means of an insurrection. In this connection, he uttered the ominous phrase: “In order to ‘sweep away’ such a majority (the majority of the CC at the time – V. R.), it would be necessary to start a civil war in the party.”³²

On the same day, Trotsky gave a speech at the plenum, “The War Danger, Defense Policy, and the Opposition,” in which he declared that “the lie about conditional defensism, the lie about two parties, and the foulest lie about insurgency, these lies we fling back into the faces of the slanderers.”³³ Regarding the question addressed by Stalin in his recent article in *Pravda*, “Is the Opposition really against a victory of the USSR in its impending battles with imperialism?” Trotsky said:

We will ignore the impudence of the question ... We will take the question as it is posed and answer it accordingly ... The Opposition is *for* the victory of the USSR — it has proved this and will prove it again in deeds no worse than any other group. For Stalin, however, this is not the point. In essence, Stalin has another question in mind, which he does not dare to state. Specifically: “Does the Opposition really think that Stalin’s leadership is incapable of securing a victory for the USSR?” Yes, this is what the Opposition thinks. ...

Molotov: So where’s the Party?

Trotsky: You have strangled the party. The Opposition believes that Stalin’s leadership is making victory more difficult ... To summarize: Are we for the socialist fatherland? Yes! For Stalin’s course? No!³⁴

Having examined the question of “the violation of party discipline by comrades Trotsky and Zinoviev,” the August Plenum resolved to remove from discussion the question of their expulsion from the Central Committee and instead to issue them a severe reprimand with a warning. This action once again demonstrated “the principal art of Stalinist strategy: ‘the cautious blows against the Party delivered in discrete doses.’”³⁵

Stalin would not have been Stalin if, while relentlessly forcing the inner-party struggle, he had not concealed for the time being his intention of mercilessly punishing the Opposition. In November 1926, he vowed that Trotsky’s statement — that the theses passed at the Fifteenth Conference on the Opposition bloc must inevitably lead to expulsion of the Opposition’s leaders from the party — “lacked any basis whatsoever ... it is false.”³⁶ At the August Plenum of 1927, Stalin “dissuaded” the more zealous members of the CC from immediately expelling Trotsky and Zinoviev from the CC, for which he was even accused of “softness” by several of his own supporters.

In September 1927, thirteen Oppositionists in the CC and CCC presented the Politburo with an extensive document known as the “Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) to the Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b). The Party Crisis and the Means of Overcoming It.” The CC forbade the circulation of this document, which was intended for discussion in the course of the pre-congress discussion. The Opposition then printed the platform in an illegal print shop as a brochure under the heading, “As a Manuscript – only for Members of the VKP(of Bolsheviks)” and began to circulate it among communists. Although many who had signed the “Declaration of the 83” during the gathering of signatures in the summer of 1927 had been expelled from the party, a new collection of signatures began on the new document. According to the CCC, more than 3,300 individuals signed the “Declaration of the 83,” and “a bit more” signed the “Platform.”³⁷

At the same time, illegal meetings of workers and students wishing to hear members of the Opposition began to take place in Moscow and in

Leningrad. Nearly 20,000 individuals attended these gatherings, which were held for the most part in the apartments of workers. The most massive meeting occurred in the Moscow Higher Technological Institute, where more than two thousand persons attended. After this event, the CC issued an appeal to workers to use force to break up any such meetings organized by Oppositionists.

This appeal merely concealed the thoroughly prepared attacks on the Opposition by the armed workers' detachments led by the GPU. Stalin wanted a bloody denouement. We issued a signal for the temporary suspension of large meetings.³⁸

The order to suspend the meetings was issued, however, only after a mass demonstration on 17 October 1927 in Leningrad in honor of the anniversary meeting held there by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR.

Trotsky, Zinoviev, and other leaders of the Opposition drove about the city in a car in order to observe the scale and mood of the demonstration. When their car approached the trucks that were outfitted with tribunals for the CEC leaders who were greeting the demonstrators, a commandant offered to lead them to the tribunal. The Oppositionists occupied the last truck, which was still empty. Immediately thereafter, columns of demonstrators headed for their truck. At that moment,

hundreds of the most loyal agents of the apparatus were sent into the crowd. They attempted to whistle, but the solitary whistles were hopelessly drowned out by exclamations of approval. The further the demonstration developed, the more clearly intolerable the situation became for the official leaders of the demonstration. In the end, the CEC chairman (Kalinin – V. R.) and several of its other most prominent members descended from the first platform, before which stood a gaping emptiness, and ascended ours, which occupied the last place and which was designated for the least important guests. Even this courageous step, however, did not save the occasion: the masses stubbornly shouted names — which were not those of the occasion's official hosts.³⁹

These events in Leningrad gave the ruling faction grounds to accelerate its reprisals against leaders of the Opposition. For this purpose, a joint plenum of the CC and CCC was summoned on 21–23 October 1927. This was the final plenum at which Trotsky received the

opportunity to speak publicly. The leaders of the Opposition at the plenum once again raised the question of publishing the “Testament” and removing Stalin from the post of General Secretary. In response, Stalin was forced to repeat aloud Lenin’s description of him in the “Testament,” which had already been read several times at the plenum. This description was printed (for the first and last time before 1956) in the text of Stalin’s speech published on 2 November in *Pravda* (that part of the speech was not included in Stalin’s collected works).

After reciting Lenin’s description of him, Stalin interpreted Lenin’s criticism in such a way for the meeting that his negative attributes, as described by Lenin, appeared as virtues:

It is said that in this “Testament,” comrade Lenin was proposing to the Congress, in view of Stalin’s “rudeness,” to consider the question of replacing Stalin at the post of General Secretary with another comrade. This is absolutely true. Yes, I am rude, comrades, toward those who rudely and treacherously wreck and split the Party. I never concealed this and I do not conceal it now. Perhaps a certain mildness is required in the treatment of splitters. But I cannot do this.^{[40](#)}

This part of Stalin’s speech was included under the heading “Some Minor Questions.” As he included among those “minor questions” the question of the “Testament’s” fate, Stalin claimed:

It was proved once and again that no one is concealing anything, that Lenin’s “Testament” was addressed to the Thirteenth (and not the Twelfth! – V. R.) Party Congress, ... that the Congress decided *unanimously* not to publish it.^{[41](#)}

All members of the CC knew well that the vote at the Thirteenth Congress was never actually taken, but not a single representative of the CC majority refuted Stalin’s assertion.

Finally, having reminded the meeting about his numerous “requests” to be removed from the post of General Secretary and about the rejection of those requests, Stalin declared:

What could I have done? Abandon my post? That is not consistent with my character — I have never abandoned any posts and do not have the right to abandon them, for that would be desertion. As I said before, I am a man who has no choice, and when the Party requires that I do something, I must obey.^{[42](#)}

The October Plenum confirmed the decision of the July (1926) Plenum to request permission from the Fifteenth Party Congress to publish both the “Letter to the Congress” and Lenin’s letters of 1917 in which he proposed to expel Kamenev and Zinoviev from the party. In spite of this confirmation, however, Lenin’s two letters that criticized the October mistakes of Kamenev and Zinoviev were published in *Pravda* a month in advance of the Congress as a supplement to an editorial entitled “Lenin on the strikebreakers in October 1917. Strike-breaking in 1917 and strike-breaking in 1927.” The article emphasized that “Lenin’s letters are significant not only as purely historical documents, but also as political characterizations for the present period.”⁴³

The recurrence of “strike-breaking” was perceived in the efforts of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other leaders of the Opposition to promote the publication not only of “secret inner-party documents,” but also of secret investigative material of the GPU, in the press organs of foreign groups close to the Opposition. Although the article failed to indicate precisely which secret materials had been given to the “enemy press,” one can assume that it referred to published materials pertaining to the arrest of organizers of the illegal Opposition print shop. On the basis of this evidence, the article concluded that the mistakes of comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev in October 1917 were “not accidental.” It also concluded that “an indisputable link had been shown between those mistakes and the present mistakes of these leaders of the Opposition, and therefore the ‘strike-breaking’ of 1917 exhibited a close connection with the strike-breaking of 1927.”⁴⁴

As for the “Letter to the Congress,” in his concluding speech on the report of the CCC-Rabkrin at the Fifteenth Party Congress, Ordzhonikidze asked the congress to accept the proposal of the July Plenum to publish “the last letters of Vladimir Ilyich concerning inner-party disagreements” and to repeal the resolution of the Thirteenth Congress forbidding the publication of the “Testament.” The proposal “to publish not only the letter known as the ‘Testament,’ but also other unpublished letters on inner-party questions, while attaching the so-

called ‘Testament’ to the stenographic report”⁴⁵ was seconded by Rykov and then unanimously adopted by the congress.

However, not a single one of Lenin’s letters (or, more precisely, articles) that had been concealed from the party was published in the USSR until 1956. Only isolated fragments of the “Letter to the Congress” were attached to the secret *Bulletin of the Fifteenth Party Congress* which appeared in a press run of 13,500 copies. This document was made available only to the top layer of the apparatus, but remained unknown to the overwhelming majority of party members. By 1927, the text of the “Testament” was confiscated as “anti-party” literature during searches of Oppositionists.

Meanwhile, in their pre-congress speeches, the leaders of the ruling faction, forced to address the question of the “Testament,” assured Communists that Stalin had taken Lenin’s advice and changed his behavior. Stalin himself, depicting himself as the victim of “persecution” by the Opposition, periodically appealed to the CC plenum with a request to be relieved of his duties as General Secretary. Thus, on 27 December 1926 he presented the following note:

To the plenum of the CC (comrade Rykov). I request that you remove me from the post of General Secretary of the CC. I declare that I am no longer able to work at this post, and no longer have the strength to work at this post.⁴⁶

Naturally, following this declaration, the Stalin-Bukharin majority of the plenum “obligated” Stalin “to submit” to the decision rejecting his resignation.

Stalin appealed to the CC plenum elected by the Fifteenth Party Congress with his final pharisaic request of this sort. At a session of the plenum on 19 December he announced:

Comrades! I have been asking the CC for three years to remove me from my obligations as General Secretary of the CC. Every time the plenum has refused my request. I understand that until recently we faced conditions that required the party to retain me at that post, as a man more or less tough who provides a certain antidote against the dangers posed by the Opposition. I realize that it was necessary to retain me at the post of General Secretary, despite the well-known letter of comrade Lenin. Now, however, those

conditions have disappeared, since the Opposition is now smashed ... Therefore, it would seem that there is no longer any basis for considering the Plenum correct in refusing to honor my request to free me from the duties of General Secretary. Moreover, we have Lenin's instructions, which we cannot ignore and which are necessary, in my view, to implement. I understand that the party was forced, because of certain conditions of inner-party development, to avoid these instructions until recently. But I repeat that these particular conditions have now disappeared and it is time, I think, to follow the instructions of comrade Lenin. Therefore I ask the Plenum to free me from the post of General Secretary of the CC. I assure you, comrades, that the party stands only to win from this move.⁴⁷

Of course, now the completely homogeneous, pro-Stalin Central Committee, following Voroshilov's proposal, once again rejected Stalin's "request" unanimously, with only one abstention. After the vote Stalin declared that he had "forgotten to vote," and therefore asked that his vote be counted "against" the accepted resolution.

In order to win such "unanimous" support from the CC, Stalin needed to complete the organizational rout of the Left Opposition at the Fifteenth Party Congress. His task would prove somewhat difficult, however; for virtually on the eve of the congress, warnings made by the Opposition over the preceding two years were borne out. They had predicted that the continued implementation of the Stalin-Bukharin policy would inevitably lead to economic convulsions connected with a new "grain strike" of the peasantry.

1. Пятнадцатая конференция ВКП(б). Стенографический отчет, Москва, 1927, С. 495, 496, 503 [*Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b)*, pp. 495, 496, 503].

2. Там же, С. 633 [*Ibid.*, p. 633].

3. Там же, С. 578–579 [*Ibid.*, pp. 578–579].

4. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Моя жизнь*, М., 1991, С. 502 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 528–529].

5. *Правда*, 1926, 17 октября [Cf. "Statement of the Opposition," in: Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926–27), p. 129].

6. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, Krupskaya called for delegates not to believe that the majority is always correct. As an example, she referred to the Fourth (Stockholm) Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, where the majority turned out to be in the minority.

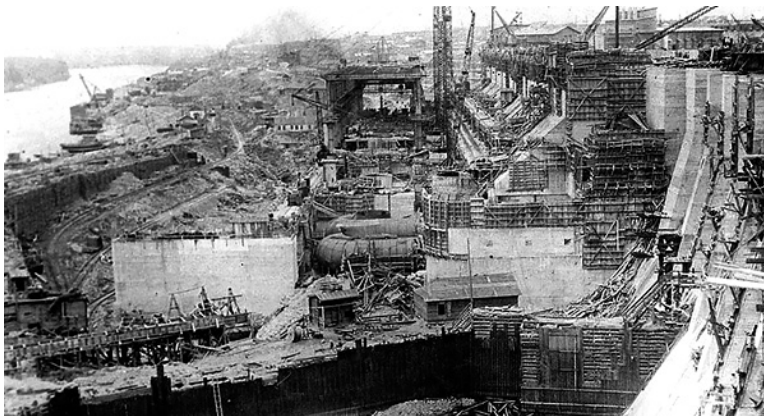
- [7.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 133 [Cf. *Stalin's Letters to Molotov*, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 127].
- [8.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 20 мая [*Pravda*, 20 May 1927].
- [9.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 2, С. 207 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1989, № 2, “N. K. Krupskaya to L. D. Trotsky,” 19 May 1927, p. 207].
- [10.](#) Там же, С. 206–207 [Ibid., “G. Ye. Zinoviev to N. K. Krupskaya,” 16 May 1927, pp. 206–207].
- [11.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 9, С. 116 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 9, p. 121].
- [12.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 47–48 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 7, “On the So-Called ‘Counter-Revolutionary Democratic Centralist Organization of T. V. Sapronov and V. M. Smirnov,’” p. 47–48].
- [13.](#) Волкогонов, Д. А., *Триумф и трагедия. И. В. Сталин. Политический портрет*, Книга I, Часть I, Москва, 1989, С. 53–54 [Cf. Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin. Triumph & Tragedy*, Grove Press, 1991, pp. 14–15].
- [14.](#) The published version of Stalin's speech in his collected works presented this part of the speech in an edited and extremely abridged form, without, of course, his response to the objections by Kamenev and Trotsky. (Сталин, *Сочинения*, Т. 9, С. 77 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 9, pp. 80–81]).
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 53 [Ibid., p. 15].
- [16.](#) *Вопросы истории КПСС*, 1990, № 4, С. 101 [*Questions of History of the CPSU*, 1990, № 4, p. 101].
- [17.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [18.](#) Там же [Ibid.].
- [19.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 13 мая [*Pravda*, 13 May 1927].
- [20.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 137 [First Speech to CCC, 24 June 1924; Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 103].
- [21.](#) Там же, С. 138 [Ibid., pp. 104–105].
- [22.](#) Л. Троцкий. Термидор и антисемитизм, 22 февраля 1937 (Т 4105, 4106), [Leon Trotsky, “Thermidor and Anti-Semitism,” 22 February 1937; Cf. *Leon Trotsky on the Jewish Question*, Pathfinder Press, 1970, p. 25].
- [23.](#) Там же, С. 25–26 [Ibid., pp. 25–26].
- [24.](#) Там же, С. 26 [Ibid., p. 26].
- [25.](#) Троцкий, Лев, *Портреты революционеров*, М., 1991, С. 189–190 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, pp. 45–46].
- [26.](#) *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 188 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 4, p. 188].
- [27.](#) *Пятнадцатый съезд ВКП(б)*. Стенографический отчет, М., 1963, Т. 1, С. 397–398 [*Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, pp. 397–398].
- [28.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 171 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 577].

- [29.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 48 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 7, p. 48].
- [30.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 22 июня [*Pravda*, 22 June 1927].
- [31.](#) Письмо Троцкого Орджоникидзе, 11 июля 1927; цит. по: Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 52 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, p. 55].
- [32.](#) Там же, С. 54 [*Ibid.*, 57].
- [33.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 177 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 137].
- [34.](#) Там же, С. 179 [*Ibid.*, p. 139].
- [35.](#) Там же, С. 165 [*Ibid.*, p. 127].
- [36.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 8, С. 293 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 8, p. 306].
- [37.](#) II пленум ЦКК созыва XV съезда ВКП(б), С. 227 [Second Plenum of the CCC called by the Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b), p. 227].
- [38.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д. *Моя Жизнь*, С. 505 [Cf. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 532].
- [39.](#) Там же, С. 506 [*Ibid.*, p. 533].
- [40.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 175 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, pp. 180–181].
- [41.](#) Там же, С. 173 [*Ibid.*, p. 178].
- [42.](#) Там же, С. 176 [*Ibid.*, p. 181].
- [43.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 1 ноября [*Pravda*, 1 November 1927].
- [44.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [45.](#) *Пятнадцатый съезд ВКП(б)*. Стенографический отчет, М., 1963, Т. 1, С. 623 [*Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, p. 623].
- [46.](#) *Гласность*, 1992, 18 июня, № 22 ; *Правда*, 1989, 2 февраля [*Glasnost*, 18 June 1992, № 22; *Pravda*, 2 February 1989].
- [47.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].

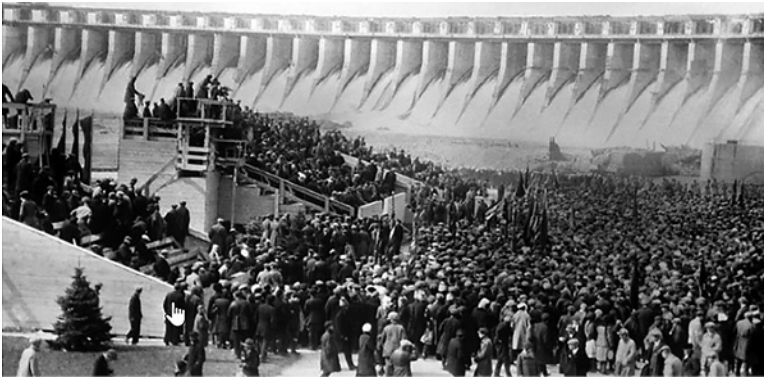
Building of DnieproGES [Hydroelectric Station] 1927–1932



Construction begins 1927



Construction continues 1930



Grand Opening on 10 October 1932

47. The Crisis Erupts

While developing the struggle against the United Opposition along all lines, the ruling faction was forced to borrow a few of its goals due to unforeseen events. Its socioeconomic policy in 1926–1927 amounted to eclectic vacillation, including sudden “zigzags to the left.” One of these zigzags was the proposal at the Fifteenth Conference [1926] “in a relatively minimal historical period to catch up with, and then surpass, the level of the industrially advanced capitalist countries.” In connection with this, the conference resolution aimed at accelerating industrialization and emphasized that at its first stage, “expenditures on major construction would place a significant strain on the national economy.”¹ In accordance with this directive, which represented a break with the conception of a “tortoise pace,” investment in large-scale construction in the 1926/27 economic year, as Trotsky had been proposing in April 1926, was increased to one billion rubles. Work was begun on the DnieproGES [Dniepr Hydroelectric Station], which, as Stalin had told a few people during an earlier polemic with the Opposition, “was as needed by the country as a muzhik needs a gramophone.”

The ruling faction was forced to resort to measures aimed at a certain “transfer” of money from the countryside to the needs of industrialization. The April CC Plenum of 1927 decided to raise taxes on kulak households. Following this decision, grain purchase prices were lowered, which objectively struck a blow at the entire peasantry (not only

its well-to-do sector) and became one of the main precursors to the crisis in grain procurement of 1927–1928.

Already by the spring of 1927 it became clear that the well-to-do layers in the countryside had become sufficiently strong to offer resistance to state grain procurements by withholding their grain stores and refusing to sell them to the state at fixed prices. In the previous year, both the state and cooperative grain-procurement organizations had managed relatively successfully to compete with private traders of grain and ensure that the state received enough grain to at least feed the cities, if not meet the demands of export and import. In 1927, however, such a result had not been achieved. Although this year had been the third in a row to enjoy a good harvest, by 1 January 1928 less than 300 million poods had been procured, which amounted to two-thirds of the previous year's level.

One of the reasons for the emergence of a spontaneous “grain strike” was the demagogic declarations by the majority of the CC that it was defending the peasantry from the Left Opposition, which was allegedly yearning to “rob” it. Thus drawn into the inner-party debates, the prosperous layers of the countryside seriously adopted a capitalist-farmer outlook, believed in the prolonged character of the “liberal” course of the party, and came to the conclusion that they could dictate their own terms to the state. In these conditions, strivings to “normalize” the market (which found reflection in the works of several economists) became ever more active; that is, they were inclined to remove the limitations on the free trade of grain and abolish the state monopoly on foreign trade.

In 1927, the prosperous layers in the countryside had accumulated a significant amount of paper money for which they could not obtain needed consumer goods. Therefore, they were in no hurry to sell grain to the state at state-established procurement prices. They could pay the relatively modest agricultural tax by selling secondary produce and industrial crops, setting aside the sale of grain until spring, when the price for it would grow.

By the beginning of 1927, the natural reserves of grain in the villages had reached eight hundred to nine hundred million poods. As indicated

in the counter-theses of the Opposition:

[These] reserves, exceeding the necessary insurance fund, continue to grow, and by the end of the present crop year will rise another two hundred to three hundred million poods and surpass a billion. This fact is an ominous indicator of the stoppage in commodity circulation in the countryside, the result of which will inevitably be a halt in the growth of the area sown. We are faced here with the consequences of an insufficient development of industry that is unable to guarantee the exchange fund for these reserves in the village.

A billion poods of unused grain reserves was “the dead capital of Soviet society, located primarily in the hands of the well-to-do layers in the countryside.”²

All this spoke to the fact that, despite the claims of Stalin, Bukharin, and their supporters about the “bankruptcy” of the Opposition, the prognoses of the latter about the growing crisis tendencies were fully confirmed. The spontaneous elements of the NEP had begun to exert a destructive influence on the economy as a whole. The socioeconomic policy of the ruling faction was becoming more vulnerable and in need of serious correctives in the face of new tasks connected with the technological reconstruction of the national economy. What was required was a planned turn-about in this policy, which in normal conditions of party life could be prepared ideologically and organizationally. Party policy could have been corrected in a rational way, which presupposed free discussion of the time-limits, tempos, and methods of solving new problems.

However such discussion of political alternatives was already proving to be impossible, since all forces of the party were diverted and concentrated on “finishing off the Opposition”; the self-initiative of party organizations had been stifled, and criticism of the mistakes made by the Central Committee had begun to be punished with police repression. All this predetermined the subsequent tragic development of events, during which the possibility of free discussion even within the Politburo was liquidated: its last members who were capable of speaking with Stalin on equal terms had been ostracized and driven from the political arena.

The crisis that erupted at the end of 1927 was unexpected for the ruling faction. As they continued to reproach the Opposition for “super-industrialization” and “panic before the kulak,” Bukharin and Rykov continued to insist, as before, that the goods famine in the country was quickly abating, and Mikoyan boastfully declared:

The peasant element, the peasant grain market is fully and completely in our hands, we can at any time lower or raise the price of grain, we have all the levers of control in our hands.³

Only after the transition to extraordinary measures were Rykov and Bukharin forced to acknowledge the responsibility of the ruling faction, and their own personally, for serious mistakes in economic policy during 1926 and 1927. As Rykov said in 1928:

At the moment the crisis emerged, I considered it short-lived and not as deep as it actually turned out to be. Such an assessment can be seen in my report at the Fifteenth Party Congress.⁴

In September 1928, Bukharin, too, delivered a belated acknowledgment of the mistakes made by party leaders. He wrote:

While trying to draw lessons from our own experience and constantly criticizing ourselves, we must also come to the following conclusion: even now we have insufficiently recognized the fully novel conditions of the reconstruction period. It is precisely for this reason that we have “been lagging behind” so much. ... We practically shoved aside the problem of state and collective farms after the grain procurement crisis and the shocks associated with it, and so forth; in short, we acted largely according to the truly Russian proverb: “If there’s no thunder, the muzhik will not cross himself.”⁵

Virtual recognition of the bankruptcy of the ruling faction’s policy of 1926–1927 figured as well in Bukharin’s speech at the April 1929 Plenum of the CC, where he said:

For a certain amount of time, we did not notice the situation with grain; for a certain amount of time we carried out industrialization at the expense of an emission tax and the expenditure of funds ... Difficulties began to emerge most clearly when the very sources on which we were proceeding for a certain time *dried up*, and when we saw that we *could not* proceed any farther in that way. This moment coincides with the greatest difficulties. But as soon as that’s

the way things stood, once these difficulties became an objective fact, we then fell into the first round of extraordinary measures.⁶

Thus, Bukharin was admitting that the dramatic, and then tragic, unfolding of events at the end of the 1920s was to a significant degree determined by the mistakes committed by the ruling faction in the previous period.

The only party leader who never once admitted his responsibility for the failures of economic policy in 1926–1927 was Stalin. Even at the height of the “grain strike,” which threatened the supply of grain to the cities and the army, he continued to portray the economic and political situation of the country in glowing terms. He declared that the party “had achieved pacification of the countryside,” and accused the Opposition of wanting “to open a civil war in the villages.” Thus, nothing suggested that the main “pacifier” of the countryside would, a few months later, begin to carry out a fundamentally new policy, which would cost the Soviet countryside unbelievably monstrous human and material sacrifices; Stalin would turn into the cruelest “pacifier” of the peasantry, using, moreover, such methods that never had been envisioned by the Left Opposition.

The consequences of the “grain strike” appeared in the form of a series of interconnected crises in the national economy, which were deepened by the sharpening of the international situation. As the leaders of both the ruling and opposition factions noted, when the British government broke diplomatic relations with the USSR, the danger of war was placed on the agenda. Speeches by Stalin, Bukharin, and other party leaders about the near possibility of an attack by a bloc of capitalist states on the USSR, as well as a trial mobilization carried out in response, created panic among the population. In August 1927, people massively began to buy up flour, sugar, and other items of prime necessity as reserves in case of war. Lines for produce began to form; the black market and speculation became active. Reserves of grain held by the state were exhausted. Growing difficulties in supply led to a situation where, even in Moscow (not to mention the provinces), at the end of 1927, there was no tea, soap, butter, or white bread on sale. All this meant, as Mikoyan

confessed at the Fifteenth Congress, that the country was suffering “economic difficulties on the eve of war, without there actually being a war.”⁷

In these extreme circumstances, the Opposition proposed to organize a compulsory grain loan from 10 percent of the most prosperous peasant farms amounting to 150–200 million poods. Oppositionists considered that it would be expedient to partially export this grain in order to use the hard currency paid for it to buy an additional amount of raw material and machinery for industry. “One hundred fifty million poods out of 500 million poods remaining after reserves set aside for themselves would give us new means of production worth hundreds of millions of rubles.”⁸ This enormous sum of new capital would give the opportunity to hire many tens of thousands of the unemployed and throw onto the market an additional mass of goods for weakening the consumer goods famine in the village and food supply difficulties in the cities.

Stating that the lion’s share of the grain and other reserves of the village was concentrated in the hands of the kulaks, the Opposition stressed that:

[These kulak reserves] clearly hold back the economic growth of industry and of the entire economy, and they shatter the plans of Soviet power ... If the working class can support the state out of its low pay and supports the industrialization loan, then there should be no barrier that prevents the upper layers of the countryside from supporting the Soviet state, export, and industry with a portion of their reserves.⁹

The ruling faction categorically rejected the proposals of the Opposition about a grain loan. At the Fifteenth Congress, Molotov was supported by Stalin as he called the loan a break with the policy of the NEP, and a line toward destruction of the Soviet state. Molotov declared:

Whoever now proposes to us this policy of a compulsory loan ... whatever good intentions are behind such a proposal, is an enemy of the workers and peasants (Stalin: “That’s right!”).¹⁰

Meanwhile, on the eve of the congress, the ruling faction had already begun to make some “shifts” in the direction of revising its political program. The initiator of this revision, which actually came close to the

ideas of the Left Opposition, was Bukharin. In October 1927 he promoted the slogan of “a more forced offensive against the kulak.” This offensive must signify, in his opinion, a struggle against the purchase, sale, donation, and bequeathing of land; a restriction on the terms of land rent; “the refinement and improvement of the raising of a progressive income tax, in the sense of catching all the income of the kulak”; “the strict observance of the code of labor laws in the village capitalist, i.e., kulak, economy,” etc.¹¹

The political reversal announced by Bukharin found reflection in the theses presented for pre-congress discussion by Rykov on directives for drawing up the first Five-Year Plan, and in the theses by Molotov on work in the countryside.

These theses made a preliminary review of the changes already named in the realm of agrarian policy, as well as the increase in industrial investment, strengthening the planning role of the state and control over private capital. All this meant a renunciation of unconditional support of free market relations.

In discussing the theses of Rykov and Molotov at the October Plenum of the CC, the leaders of the Opposition turned attention to the fact that the new directive of the CC had not been accompanied with appropriate calculations (Molotov’s theses did not contain a single figure), nor by acknowledgment of the onset of a serious economic crisis, about which the Opposition had been warning for a long time.

When he spoke at the plenum, Smilga said that the consequences of the inflationary policy being conducted by the ruling faction were reflected in the acute sharpening of the goods famine and was beginning to be felt in the grain procurements; in their absolute dimensions, these procurements were lower than the previous year and were falling from week to week. This testified to the absolute correctness of the Opposition when it came to the question of stratification in the countryside and the influence of this stratification on the country’s economy.¹²

The “Counter-Theses” of the Opposition emphasized that, after a delay of more than two years,

the majority of the CC is copying from the program of the Opposition the slogan of squeezing the kulak and Nepman, but in doing so, it is making a hopeless attempt to explain the necessity of the “forced pressure” on the kulak and Nepman by the fact that they are growing weaker ... This slogan, if it is taken seriously, assumes a change in the entire policy, a new grouping of forces, and a new orientation of all state organs. This must be said clearly and precisely. But neither the kulak, on the one hand, nor the poor peasant, on the other, has forgotten that for two years, the CC has been defending a completely different policy. It is absolutely clear that, in remaining silent about its previous directives, the authors of the theses proceed from the idea that to change a policy, it is enough to issue a new “command.”¹³

In promoting the slogan of “forced pressure” on the kulak, the ruling faction did not review its earlier directive, according to which individual peasant farms must remain the “main backbone” of agriculture for several decades. In accordance with this directive, insignificant state resources had been invested, as before, in the creation and strengthening of collective farms. As a result, from 1926–1927, the modest number of collective farms that existed in the country actually decreased.

In contrast to this line, the Opposition advanced the idea of beginning the gradual collectivization of peasant farms, first of all those of the poor peasants, in order save them from pauperization and ruin. The “Theses of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) About Work in the Countryside” stated:

The growing individual farming in the village must be offset by a more rapid growth of the collectives. Significant allocations must be systematically assigned from year to year to the peasant poor organized in collectives; they must be supplied with the means of production at the expense of the state budget and with favorable conditions.

The same document formulated the tasks of party policy with regard to the middle peasants in the following way:

The party must assist in every way to lift economically the middle-peasant segment of the countryside by means of a correct policy of procurement prices, the organization of accessible credit and cooperation, thereby systematically and gradually leading this most populous layer of the countryside in the transition to large-scale, mechanized, collective farming.

In making these suggestions, the Opposition stressed:

The basis for collectivization can only be made by the process of the growing industrialization of agriculture. Without machinery in farming, successful and wide-scale work on genuine collectivization is impossible.

Only by resting on highly developed and electrified industry, will the state “be able to overcome the technological backwardness of small and even miniscule farms, having organized them on the foundations of major production and collectivization.”¹⁴

Thus, the documents of the Opposition did not contain even a hint of the need to carry out “complete collectivization,” let alone in the violent manner in which it was accomplished a few years later by the Stalinist clique. It must also be said unequivocally that not a single one of these documents interpreted the struggle against the kulak in the spirit of “dekulakization,” that is, as the administrative expropriation of kulak households, let alone their deportation to far-away regions of the country.

However, even the Opposition’s approach to the tasks of collectivization was rejected by the ruling faction, who denied the growing polarization in the countryside and reproached the village poor for their loafing, their parasitic psychology, and so forth. On 5 November 1927, in a discussion with a delegation of foreign workers, Stalin replied to their question about the prospects of collectivization in the following way:

We are thinking of achieving collectivization in agriculture gradually, through measures of an economic, financial, and cultural-political manner ...

And later:

All-embracing collectivization will come when the peasant farms are rebuilt on a new technological basis of mechanization and electrification ... We are proceeding in this matter, but we haven’t arrived there yet and will not arrive there soon.¹⁵

Molotov showed a particularly scornful attitude toward the perspective of collectivization when he said: “We cannot slip into poor-peasant illusions about collectivization of the broad peasant masses under the present conditions.”¹⁶

On the eve of the Fifteenth Congress, the leaders of the ruling faction devoted much less attention to working over socioeconomic policy than to their main political goal — driving the Left Opposition from the ranks of the party.

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48. Theory and Practice of the Thermidorian Amalgam

Immediately before the Fifteenth Congress,

the armed forces of the GPU were used, without any bloodshed for now, to make arrests, disperse revolutionary meetings, and conduct searches of communists. ... One must not forget that the GPU belonged to the party, emerged from its ranks, and included thousands of Bolsheviks who had passed through the underground and civil war. It was only now, in 1927, that the GPU finally turned into an instrument of the bureaucracy against the people and against the party.¹

In order to complete this process, to remove the organs of the GPU out from under the control of the party and place them under the personal control of Stalin, it was necessary to drive the leaders of the Opposition from the Central Committee.

In the eyes of the majority of communists, duplicating Opposition documents, even in an illegal manner, still could not be viewed as a crime that required the intervention of the GPU and the arrest of Oppositionists. The organizers of the illegal printing press were therefore accused of ties with bourgeois intellectuals, some of whom “in turn, were allied with White-Guardists planning a military conspiracy.”² On 27 October, *Pravda* published an announcement about the expulsion from the party of Preobrazhensky, Serebriakov, Sharov, and other prominent Oppositionists on this false charge. Several Oppositionists, direct participants in organizing the printing press, were imprisoned in the

internal prison of the OGPU. Thus, a new Stalinist provocation was set into motion, facilitating the conduct of mass repression against the Opposition. It was precisely in connection with this provocation that the Opposition first used the concept of “Thermidorian amalgam.”

Together with Stalin, Bukharin made a substantive contribution to the creation of this amalgam. At the October Plenum of the CC in 1927, in response to the demand by Trotsky and other leaders of the Opposition to free any communists arrested in the print-shop case, Bukharin declared that “the Opposition is transgressing not only the bounds of party legality, but also the bounds of Soviet legality.” Bukharin claimed that a “third force” was using the Opposition, that is, social and class groupings that were hostile to Soviet power,

who are crawling into the fissure that has formed within our party, are increasing pressure on the walls of this fissure and, in this way, while driving a wedge ever more into our inner-party disagreements, and while using the intensification and deepening of inner-party disagreements, they might produce an upheaval in the entire system of proletarian dictatorship in our country.

At the same time, Bukharin vowed:

The CC of our party ... has shown truly enormous forbearance; it has always cast a life preserver to members of the Opposition who have gone too far in their factional work, overdoing things to the point of madness.

In reply to these words, Trotsky tossed out: “You are confusing a hangman’s noose with a life preserver.”³

The version of the “ties of the Opposition with a military conspiracy” was based solely on the testimony of an agent of the OGPU specially sent to participate in the illegal print shop and declared to be a former Wrangel officer [i.e., an officer in the anti-Bolshevik White Army led by Wrangel in the Civil War – trans.]. How this new spicy dish was prepared in Stalin’s kitchen was recounted in the book, *The Secret History of Stalin’s Crimes*, written by Alexander Orlov, a senior official in the OGPU who became a “non-returner” in 1938. The hectograph on which the group of Oppositionists prepared anti-Stalinist leaflets was discovered with the help of the provocateur Stroilov who had promised the Oppositionist

that he would obtain a supply of paper and other materials necessary for work on the hectograph. “All right,” declared Stalin to Yagoda who had told him of his plan to infiltrate Stroilov into the midst of the Oppositionists.

Only raise your agent in rank. Let him become a Wrangel officer, and in the report you will write that the Trotskyists were collaborating with a White-Guardist follower of Wrangel.⁴

While not knowing all these details of Stalin’s provocation, the leaders of the Opposition, nevertheless, indicated in a letter sent to the CC with regard to the present frame-up that it had been fabricated along the lines of the frame-ups widely practiced by Thermidorians at the last stage of the Great French Revolution.

At that time it was called an “amalgam.” In one trial, they would unite revolutionaries and monarchists, left Jacobins and speculators, in order to mix up the cards and deceive the people. The Thermidorian epoch of the French Revolution is filled with such “amalgams.”⁵

In his speech at the October Plenum, Trotsky said:

My proposal — to discuss separately the question of the Wrangel officer and military conspiracy — was denied. I raised, essentially, the question of why, by whom, and how the party was deceived when it was said that communists connected with the Opposition were participating in a counter-revolutionary organization. In order to show again what you understand by a discussion, you decreed to remove my short speech about the bogus Wrangel officer from the transcript, i. e., to hide it from the party. Bukharin has been offering us here the philosophy of Thermidorian amalgam on the basis of Menzhinsky’s documents, which have nothing to do with either the print shop or the Opposition. Yet what we need is not Bukharin’s cheap philosophy, but facts. There are no facts. Therefore the entire question has been inserted into the discussion about the Opposition without any foundation. Rudeness and disloyalty have grown to the dimensions of criminal treachery ... Where does this come from? Where does it lead? Only this question has political significance. All the rest recedes into second- and tenth-rate significance.⁶

In the middle of 1927, while developing the analogy with Thermidor, Trotsky declared:

When the term “Thermidorian” is used among us, people think that it is a term of abuse. They think that these were enthusiastic counter-revolutionaries, conscious supporters of monarchic power, and so forth. Nothing of the sort! The Thermidorians were Jacobins, only those who had moved to the right. The Jacobin organization — Bolsheviks of that time — under the pressure of class contradictions, in a short period of time, became convinced that they needed to destroy the group around Robespierre. ... They said: we have destroyed a handful of people who have disrupted peace in the party, and now, after their death, the revolution will triumph completely.⁷

In this way, Trotsky fixed attention on the tragic guilt of the “right Jacobins,” just as he was fixing attention on the historical blundering of the Bolsheviks following Stalin, whose victims they would soon become themselves.

As he cited many facts and documents from the history of the Great French Revolution, Trotsky stressed that the Thermidorians, after destroying the revolutionary Jacobins, established in the Jacobin clubs

... a regime of intimidation and silence, for they compelled people to remain silent; they demanded 100 percent support in voting and abstinence from any criticism; they forced people to think as was ordered from above, and prevented them from understanding that the party is a living, independent organism, and not a self-sufficient apparatus of power.⁸

A similar party regime was established, too, in the last stages of the struggle against the still openly acting Left Opposition. Of course, the victory of Stalinism in this struggle was made possible not only by the repressions against dissident communists that intimidated the party. An enormous role in the completion of the legal anti-party struggle was played by deception of the party, falsifications put into play by the propaganda machine, which was under monopoly control by the Stalin faction. The crowning achievement of these falsifications was the forging of amalgams, i.e., equating the communist Opposition with enemies of communism. The fabrication by Stalin of ever newer amalgams led to a situation where the majority of party members fell under the power of world-historical delusion.

For the methods of political repression founded on the creation of Thermidorian amalgams to be put into circulation, careful ideological

preparation was necessary. In a speech at a session of the Central Control Commission in June 1927, Trotsky said:

In all the cells, preparations are being made at the present time to draw further and further conclusions — preparations for precisely that line which you, comrade Ordzhonikidze (at that time, chairman of the CCC – V. R.), so lightly and bureaucratically dismiss, namely, the path of expulsions and repressions. ... In all cells, reporters, especially rehearsed beforehand, pose the question of the Opposition in such a way that some worker rises — most often on instructions — and says: “Why are you bothering with them, isn’t it time to shoot them?” Then the reporter, with a hypocritically mild expression, objects, “Comrades, there is no need to rush.” This has already become a routine in the party. The question is always being posed behind the backs of the Opposition, with insinuations, with filthy implications, with rude, dishonest, and purely Stalinist distortions of the Opposition’s platform and of the revolutionary biographies of the Oppositionists, who are being portrayed as enemies of the revolution, as the enemies of the party — all this in order to provoke a wild reaction on the part of the duped audience, on the part of raw young party members with whom you are artificially loading the party ranks; so that you will later be able to say: “Now look! We are ready to be patient, but the masses are insisting.” This is the specific strategy of Stalin, you yourselves are to a greater or lesser degree the organizers of this campaign, and when the tidal wave engulfs you, you say: “The party demands it, I can do nothing about it ...”⁹

In the period of preparing the Fifteenth Congress, this kind of strategy became the basis of the CC majority’s actions. Timofei Sapronov, leader of the “Democratic Centralists,” spoke indignantly about this situation. He was characterized by Nikolai Valentinov as “the type of unbending fanatic with the traits of Avvakum, famous archpriest and schismatic of the seventeenth century who fearlessly perished at the stake for his faith.”¹⁰ While speaking on 28 October 1927 at the Orekhovo-Zuyevo Regional Party Conference, Sapronov said:

For existing procedures in the party, “pressure” is an expression that is too mild. It would be more correct to say — lack of rights for party members and unlimited power for the apparatus. ... The ruling faction has no need of an underground print shop. It has at its disposal all the first-class state print shops, all the organs of the press, whose pages are filled with lies and slander against the Opposition. But on these pages, dissenting thought is not allowed; communist, Bolshevik thought cannot put up with this ... What do we

actually see in practice? Unbridled clamp-downs, raging of the apparatus and continuation of the same mistaken policy.¹¹

The same issue was addressed in the pre-congress discussion by Aleksandr Shlyapnikov when he wrote:

The end of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution was marked by a new, extremely cruel crisis of the party. ... The pages of reports on the plenums of the CC, and in the recent period the pages of the party press, are filled with an abundance of verbal abuse, personal attacks and mudslinging, which only degrade and obscure debate, and hinder its correct understanding. The transcripts published in the press show that the plenums of the CC are becoming an arena of displaying such hostility that paralyzes the leading organ of the party. They have begun to resemble peasant gatherings that are torn apart by contradictions and inner hostility, where swearing and threats drown out arguments and convictions. Such a method of struggle is becoming an immediate and direct threat to the unity of the party, in the name of which the majority of the Central Committee uses it. But the devices of mechanically suppressing dissident thought and oppositional moods in the party milieu have proved incapable of preserving even the appearance of this unity.¹²

Even at the Fourteenth Party Congress, the first rows were filled with several provincial delegates like Moiseyenko, driven from the party a year later for moral degeneracy and abuse of power; such people interrupted the speeches of Opposition leaders with disorderly rejoinders. At later party forums, members of the presidium, leaders of the ruling faction, took this task on themselves. Their heckling and brazen insults accompanied all the speeches of Oppositionists at plenums of the CC and at the Fifteenth Congress. Recalling later that in 1927, “official sessions of the CC turned into truly repulsive spectacles,” Trotsky wrote that the goal of these sessions

was the trampling of the Opposition with roles and speeches that were assigned ahead of time. The tone of this badgering became ever more unbridled. The more brazen members of higher institutions, appointed exclusively as a reward for their insolence toward the Oppositionists, relentlessly interrupted the speeches of experienced people, first with the absurd repetition of accusations, then with shouts, and finally with swearing and the most vulgar obscenities. The director of all this was Stalin. He walked behind the presidium, glancing at those who had been assigned roles, and he didn't conceal his joy when the verbal abuse of Oppositionists assumed an

absolutely shameless character. It was hard to imagine that we were attending a session of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.¹³

Particular lack of restraint and shameful vulgarity marked the conduct of the majority of the CC at the October Plenum — the last plenum of the Central Committee at which leaders of the Opposition spoke, and whose transcript was published in the press. The speeches of Oppositionists were continually interrupted by malicious shouts, the goal of which was to prevent the speakers from delivering their arguments. These interjections served as an expression not only of the moral degeneration but also of the ideological weakness of the majority. Yevdokimov noted:

Never before in history, when discussing questions, especially those that stand today on the agenda of the Central Committee Plenum, have we seen what we are seeing today (noise, shouts). And if I cannot appeal to your courage, because you have none, then I will appeal to your conscience, because, perhaps, you have a little bit of conscience left.¹⁴

But Yevdokimov's hope proved to be completely in vain. The speeches given by Zinoviev and Trotsky proceeded under the accompaniment of unrelenting and scandalous outbursts. To illustrate this, let us examine one of the passages in the published transcript of Zinoviev's speech, in which he states what will happen, given Stalin's incorrect political line:

He will be forced to rule with extraordinary measures, in a state of siege (laughter, noise, voices: "What stupidity! Down with him! Shame on you!"). But, after all, it was said long ago that with the aid of a state of emergency, even a ruler who is not the most intelligent can rule (noise). ... Stalin is compelled to treat us to ever more spicy dishes, which will in no way go down easily in the party (noise). Here is a good example: the tale of the "military conspiracy" and "the former Wrangel officer" (due to noise and laughter, nothing can be heard).

Ask yourselves, what was published in these (Opposition – V. R.) print shops? Why, for instance, has Lenin's testament become an illegal document (noise)?

Voice: Cynic!

Zinoviev: I have seen several records of the searches of communists made by the GPU. Among the "evidence" seized is almost invariably listed Lenin's testament. ... When, in 1918 or 1921, Bukharin wrote incorrect platforms,

Lenin did not force him to print them on a rotary in an illegal print shop. ... Lenin published these platforms in our newspaper on large rotary presses and began to persuade the workers; in the end, he convinced Bukharin himself.¹⁵

Foreseeing the reaction his speech would provoke, Trotsky for the first time read his speech from a previously prepared text. How this speech looked on the pages of *Pravda* can be seen from the following excerpts:

Trotsky: ... under Lenin's leadership, with Lenin's composition of the Politburo, the general secretary played an absolutely subordinate role (noise). The situation began to change when Lenin fell ill. The selection of people through the Secretariat, the apparatus grouping around Stalin, became self-sufficient, independent of the political line. That is why Lenin, in weighing the perspective of his departure from work, gave the party his last advice: "Remove Stalin, who can lead the party to a split and its destruction" (noise).

Stepanov-Skvortsov: Old slander!

Talberg: Windbag, braggart!

Shouts: Shame!

Talberg: And do you have the correct policy?

Skrypnik: Look how far he's gone! What foul behavior!

Shouts: It's a lie!

Petrovsky: You're a despicable Menshevik!

Kalinin: Petty-bourgeois, radical!

Voice: Martov!

Trotsky: ... (due to the noise and shouts of protest, he can't be heard)... The party did not learn of this advice in a timely fashion. The handpicked apparatus concealed it. The consequences stand fully before us (noise)...

Shouts: Down with Trotsky! Enough of your chatter! Such things cannot be tolerated ...

Voroshilov: Shame upon you! (Whistling, ever growing noise. Horrible noise, nothing can be heard, the chairman rings his bell. Whistles. Voices: Down from the tribune! The chairman announces a break. Comrade Trotsky keeps reading, but not a single word can be understood. Members of the presidium get up from their places and begin to leave).¹⁶

When he sent the Secretariat of the CC the text of this speech, which they didn't allow him to finish, Trotsky wrote:

The work of the stenographers proceeded under very difficult circumstances. A number of interjections are noted, but far from all of them. It is possible that the stenographers avoided recording several interjections out of a feeling of disgust.

Trotsky also noted that the transcript did not indicate that during his speech several participants in the plenum (Yaroslavsky, Shvernik, and others) threw books and a glass at him, tried to drag him from the tribune, and so forth. Calling these methods “fascist and thuggish,” Trotsky wrote:

One cannot view the scenes being played out at the Joint Plenum as anything but directives coming from the most authoritative organ to all party organizations regarding what kind of methods should be used in the pre-congress discussion.¹⁷

In his speech, Trotsky emphasized that it was clear to him that the decisions of the plenum were preordained. He said:

You want to expel us from the Central Committee. The ruling faction, which expels from the party hundreds and hundreds of the best party members, unflinching worker-Bolsheviks; ... the faction of Stalin-Bukharin, which locks up in the internal prison of the GPU wonderful party members ... the apparatus faction, which maintains itself with violence against the party, by strangling party thought and disorganizing the proletarian vanguard not only in the USSR, but in the whole world, ... this faction cannot tolerate us in the Central Committee even for a month ahead of the congress. We understand this.¹⁸



*The “Counter-Theses” of the Trotskyist Opposition on Work in the Countryside.
Published in **Pravda** on 5 November 1927 before the Fifteenth Congress.*

The October Plenum resolved to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. At the same time, the plenum was forced to announce a pre-congress discussion with the publication, as it proceeded,

of Opposition documents, excluding the “Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists.” Stalin explained that the resolution of the Tenth Congress on unity declared that the presence of a platform was one of the signs of factionalism; he presented matters in such a way that this resolution signified a ban for all time on the submission of any ideological platforms outside the platform of the CC. Therefore, as he put it, permission to publish the “Platform” of the Opposition would be perceived as a legalization of factionalism and “a step towards splitting the party by the CC and CCC.”¹⁹

In the resolution “On the Discussion,” the October Plenum announced that it would publish the theses of the CC for the congress no later than a month before it began. Then it would begin to print a “Discussion Page” in *Pravda* in which “to publish counter-theses, amendments to the CC theses, concrete proposals on the theses, critical articles, and so forth.”²⁰

The Opposition transferred the basic positions of the “Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists” into the “Counter-Theses” to the theses of the Central Committee, published on 25 October. The Opposition’s counter-theses on work in the countryside were published five weeks before the opening of the congress (5 November), and the counter-theses on the Five-Year Plan three weeks before (17 November). By this time, all the lower-level party conferences had already been held throughout the country. Thus, the elections to the conferences — from regional to provincial — which selected delegates to the congress, were held before the discussion and without discussion. For this reason, the pre-congress discussion could not have any influence on the composition of congress delegates. The Fifteenth Party Congress was thereby shielded in advance from any influence that could result from the clash of opinions in the party.

Nevertheless, discussion in the party organizations virtually turned into voting on the platforms. The results of this voting were, of course, summarized by the party apparatus. *Pravda* regularly printed interim results of the discussion, which were intended to show that less than 1 percent of Communists were voting for the Opposition. On the day that

Pravda published the “Counter-Theses of the Opposition on the Five-Year Plan,” it was announced that almost half the party had already voted, that is 364,000 people. Among them, 360,784 had voted “for the party,” and for the Opposition, 2,423.²¹ Ten days later, Yaroslavsky announced that 615,000 people had voted for the line of the Central Committee; 3,500 had voted against; and 2,231 had abstained from voting.”²²

According to the final results announced by the apparatus, 724,000 people voted for the theses of the CC, and more than four thousand for the “Counter-Theses” of the Opposition. Stalin triumphantly presented this fact at the Fifteenth Congress as proof of the insignificance of the Opposition’s forces and of its isolation in the party ranks.²³ However, in evaluating the results of the discussion, one must consider that between the Fourteenth Congress [in December 1925] and 15 November 1927, control commissions “called to account” 2,034 people for factional activity, and during the last month — from 15 November through 15 December — 1,197 additional people. From these who were “called to account,” 970 and 794 respectively were expelled from the party.²⁴ Unceasing repressions against the Opposition meant that anyone voting for its theses was committing an act of extraordinary personal courage, since he would have to be prepared for immediate reprisals for this act (expulsion from the party, removal from work, etc.).

In recalling this stage of the inner-party struggle, I. Ya. Vrachev stated:

When they began to work over the Opposition, many people were already corrupted. For instance, a meeting would take place, and after it they would ask someone: “And how did you vote?”

“But I,” he would answer, “left before the voting.” They took note of this and established control over exiting. “And how,” they would ask another time, “did you vote now?”

“I raised my hand,” the person says, “it won’t wither and fall off.” Many people were afraid of leaving their familiar spots; they feared losing privileges, and therefore they supported Stalin.²⁵

At the end of 1927, Trotsky spoke about Stalin’s characterization of the Opposition as a “small clump” of pessimists and skeptics:

Would a careerist, i.e., a person who seeks personal success, join the Opposition now? ... Would a self-seeker in the present conditions enter the Opposition, when people are driven because of Opposition activity from the factories and plants into the ranks of the unemployed? ... What about people with large families, workers who have grown weary, who have become disillusioned in the revolution, but who remain in the party through inertia — will they join the Opposition? No, they will not. They will say: “The regime, of course, is bad, but let them do what they want, I will not stick my nose in.” What qualities are needed in order to enter the Opposition? One needs strong faith in the cause, i.e., in the cause of proletarian revolution, a genuine revolutionary faith. But you demand faith of a different color — to vote as the bosses wish, to equate the socialist fatherland with the Regional Committee and to line up as the secretary wishes.²⁶



Dmitry A. Shmidt
(1896–1937)



Vitaly M. Primakov
(1897–1937)



Vitovt K. Putna
(1893–1937)

To this one can add that the introduction into the discussion of scholasticism, dogmatism, and quotation-mongering obscured in the eyes of many rank-and-file Communists the true essence of the disagreements between the Opposition and the majority of the Central Committee.

Of course, the reprisals that had begun against the Opposition could not fail to provoke a sharp protest among the Oppositionists, many of whom had passed through the underground and the ordeal of the Civil War. In his book, *Stalin*, Trotsky cited the following incident told by Victor Serge to the Bolshevik non-returner, Alexander Barmine:

In 1927, when the Opposition was being expelled, the red general Shmidt arrived in Moscow from Ukraine. During a meeting with Stalin in the

Kremlin, he fell upon him with malicious insults and even pretended that he wanted to draw his curved saber from its scabbard in order to cut off the general secretary's ears. ... Stalin, who listened to everything, kept calm, but was pale and his lips were drawn in a tight line. Having heard how people were calling him a scoundrel, he remembered, undoubtedly, this "terrorist" threat ten years later.²⁷

The "genius at administering small doses" was in this instance forced to harbor his thirst for vengeance and delay it for almost ten years. Shmidt remained at his post as division commander until 1936, when he became the first of the High Command who was arrested for constructing a "Trotskyist organization" in the army. The next to be arrested were participants in the Opposition in 1926–1927, Primakov and Putna, who a few months later were placed on the defendants' bench with Tukhachevsky and Yakir, who had nothing to do with the Opposition.

The pretext for striking another blow at the leaders of the Opposition were the events occurring during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. In the lead-up to the jubilee, many memoirs, anthologies of documents, and historical works were published. In them, the role of Trotsky and other Oppositionists participating in the revolution were either passed over in silence or presented in a deliberately distorted light. In cinema, Stalin himself served as the main censor; after viewing the jubilee film by Sergei Eisenstein, "October," Stalin ordered him to cut a significant portion of the frames, primarily those where Trotsky was shown. In response to the director's puzzled questions, Stalin declared: "Lenin's liberalism is now out of place."²⁸

The Opposition's center made the decision to use the October celebrations to directly address the workers in Moscow and Leningrad. On the eve of the holiday, leaflets were printed, banners and posters were prepared with the slogans: "Fulfill Lenin's Testament"; "Against Opportunism, Against a Split — for the Unity of Lenin's Party"; "We Demand the Reinstatement of Communists Expelled for Opposition"; "We Demand Inner-Party Democracy"; "We Demand Wage Increases for Workers by Shrinking the Apparatus and Destroying Privileges"; etc.

On 7 November, the official demonstration in Moscow proceeded along with an alternative demonstration, organized by the Opposition and including thousands of workers, students, and cadets from the military schools. The participants of this latter demonstration were attacked and beaten by specially instructed “activists” and “druzhinniki” [voluntary detachments for maintaining order], who acted under the cover of the police and GPU agents in civilian clothing. They tore posters from the hands of demonstrators, beat them with clubs, and accompanied their assaults with Black-Hundred, anti-Semitic shouts and unbridled swearing. Behind the automobile containing Trotsky, Kamenev, and Muralov, who were driving by the columns of demonstrators, several gunshots rang out. Then an attempt was made to attack the occupants of the car physically, but the attackers were held back by demonstrators who rushed to the automobile.

At the same time, assaults were made on the apartments of several Oppositionists, who had placed Opposition posters and portraits of Lenin, Trotsky, and Zinoviev above their windows. Similar attacks were made at the hotel “Paris” (on the corner of Okhotnyi riad [“Hunter’s Row”] and Tverskaya Street), where Smilga, Preobrazhensky, and other Oppositionists stood on the balcony greeting demonstrators. Similar reprisals occurred in Leningrad, where an alternative demonstration was headed by Zinoviev, Radek, Yevdokimov, Lashevich, and other Oppositionists.

In describing all these facts in a letter addressed to the party leadership, Trotsky stressed:

The attack on Leninist slogans of the Opposition was conducted by the worst elements of Stalin’s apparatus in an alliance with the out-and-out dregs of narrow-minded philistines. ... Here, what was repeated, in an exact manner, was what was seen when the Bolsheviks were beaten on the streets of Leningrad in July 1917, when the most active and determined people were the Black-Hundred elements ... All such actions were not to the slightest degree the violent reprisals of the crowd. On the contrary, they were carried out behind the backs of the crowd, with a small number of spectators, by the forces of small groups who were led by official and semi-official figures.²⁹

The provocation planned in advance was later used by Stalin to claim that “on 7 November 1927, the open activity of the Trotskyists on the streets was a transitional moment when the Trotskyist organization showed that *it was breaking not only with party membership, but with the Soviet regime.*”³⁰ At the moment of Trotsky’s exile abroad, a new version was created — of a supposed uprising planned by the Trotskyists on 7 November; the call to fulfill Lenin’s “Testament” was interpreted as a call for such an uprising.

The independent activity of the Opposition at the October demonstration became the pretext for the expulsion, a week later, of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party, of the remaining eleven Oppositionists in the CC and CCC from these bodies, and also their removal from all party and soviet posts.

On 16 November, one more tragic event took place — the suicide of one of the leading Oppositionists, A. A. Ioffe. One of the reasons for this act was his severe illness and the refusal of the Central Committee to allow him to travel abroad for treatment. Another reason was the defeat of the Opposition, the lessons of which Ioffe tried to probe in a letter addressed to Trotsky just before his death. Immediately after his suicide, agents of the GPU appeared in Ioffe’s apartment and confiscated this letter, which was passed on to Trotsky in the form of a photocopy only several days later. The letter was used by the Stalinists, who published its separate fragments accompanied by Yaroslavsky’s mocking article, “The Philosophy of Decadence.”³¹

Ioffe’s funeral was held on a working day in order to prevent Moscow workers from taking part in it. Nevertheless, no fewer than ten thousand people attended and it turned into a powerful Opposition demonstration.

The closer the approach of the congress, the more cynically the “leaders” of the ruling faction indulged, not only in unrestrained slander against the Opposition, but in direct threats of further police repressions against it. In this endeavor, the members of the future Bukharinist “troika” could fully compete with the leading efforts of Stalin. In November 1927, Tomsy said:

The Opposition is spreading rumors very widely about repressions, about expected prisons, about Solovki (at that time, the only concentration camp for political prisoners in the country – V. R.) and so forth. In reply to this, we will say to these nervous people: “If you don’t now calm down, when we have removed you from the party, then we now say: shut up, we simply ask you politely to sit, for it is uncomfortable for you to stand. If you try now to go to the factories and plants, then we will say “please sit [in prison]” (stormy applause), for, comrades, in a dictatorship of the proletariat there can be two or even four parties, but only on one condition: one party will be in power, and all the rest will be in prison. (Applause).³²

In a sense, the culmination of the slander against the Opposition was the declaration by Rykov at the Fifteenth Party Congress:

I do not separate myself from those revolutionaries who have put in prison a few supporters of the Opposition for their anti-party and anti-Soviet activities. (Stormy, prolonged applause. Cries of “Hurrah!” Delegates stand). Comrade Kamenev ... should not have complained that a few people, given the extremely sharp, open struggle of the Opposition against the party, were put in prison; he should acknowledge that, given the “situation” that the Opposition tried to create, very few people are in prison. I think that we cannot guarantee that the prison population in the near future will not have to be increased somewhat.³³

Trotsky warned the leaders of the ruling faction that the provocative methods of “ideological struggle” inspired by Stalin and supported by them would tomorrow inevitably turn against many of them:

How is your abundance of faith tested? By voting 100 percent. Whoever does not want to participate in this forced voting tries occasionally to slip through the door. The secretary doesn’t let him through, “You must vote, and just as you are ordered, for those who deviate from voting are taken into account.”... I ask you, who are you trying to kid? You are playing bad tricks with yourselves, with the revolution, and with the party! Whoever always votes 100 percent with you, who yesterday “smeared” Trotsky as ordered, today Zinoviev, and tomorrow who will smear Bukharin and Rykov, will never be a steadfast soldier in the difficult hour of the revolution.³⁴

These words contain an explanation of the future conduct of a certain segment of the party at a “difficult hour of the revolution.” This “difficult hour” (which stretched over many years), turned out to be not only the Second World War of 1941–1945, but to no less degree, forced

collectivization and the Stalinist terror, which the party, cleansed of the Left Opposition, proved incapable of resisting.

- [1.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 219–220 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 721].
- [2.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 185 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, p. 191].
- [3.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 2 ноября [*Pravda*, 2 November 1927].
- [4.](#) Огонёк, 1989, № 51, С. 32 [*Ogonyok*, 1989, № 51, p. 32].
- [5.](#) *Партия и оппозиция по документам*. Выпуск 1, С. 39 [*The Party and the Opposition. Documents. Issue 1*, p. 39].
- [6.](#) *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 218–219 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, pp. 438–439].
- [7.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 149 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp. 113–114].
- [8.](#) Там же, С. 152 [*Ibid.*, p. 116].
- [9.](#) Там же, С. 159 [*Ibid.*, p. 122].
- [10.](#) Валентинов, Н. В., *Наследники Ленина*, М., 1991, С. 50 [N. V. Valentinov, *Lenin's Heirs*, Moscow, 1991, p. 50].
- [11.](#) *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1991, № 7, С. 48 [*Information of the CC CPSU*, 1991, № 7, p. 48].
- [12.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 22 ноября [*Pravda*, 22 November 1927].
- [13.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 246 [Cf., Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 575, 576].
- [14.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 30 октября [*Pravda*, 30 October 1927].
- [15.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 2 ноября [*Pravda*, 2 November 1927].
- [16.](#) Там же [*Ibid.*].
- [17.](#) *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 230–231 [*Communist Opposition in the USSR*, Volume 4, L. Trotsky, “To the Secretariat of the CC,” 24 October 1927, pp. 230–231].
- [18.](#) Там же, С. 219–220 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, p. 440].
- [19.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 179–180 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, pp. 185–186].
- [20.](#) *КПСС в резолюциях и решениях*, Т. 4, С. 249 [*The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions*, Volume 4, p. 249].
- [21.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 17 ноября [*Pravda*, 17 November 1927].
- [22.](#) *Правда*, 1927, 27 ноября [*Pravda*, 27 November 1927].
- [23.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 10, С. 336 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 10, pp. 344–345].
- [24.](#) *II пленум ЦКК созыва XV съезда ВКП(б)*, С. 248 [*Second Plenum of the CCC Called by the Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, p. 248].
- [25.](#) *Социологические исследования*, 1990, № 8, С. 98 [*Sociological Research*, 1990, № 8, p. 98].

- [26.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 142–143 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 108].
- [27.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 275 [Cf., Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 640].
- [28.](#) *Правда*, 1962, 28 октября [Pravda, 28 October 1962].
- [29.](#) *Коммунистическая оппозиция в СССР*, Т. 4, С. 256 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926–27)*, p. 469].
- [30.](#) Сталин, И. В., *Сочинения*, Т. 11, С. 313 [Cf. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 11, p. 327].
- [31.](#) *Большевик*, 1927, № 23–24, С. 135–144 [Bolshevik, 1927, № 23–24, pp. 135–144].
- [32.](#) *Первая Ленинградская областная конференция ВКП(б). 15–19 ноября 1927. Стенографический отчет*, Ленинград, 1927, С. 27, 28 [The First Leningrad Regional Conference of the VKP(b). 15–19 November 1927. Stenographic Record, Leningrad, 1927, pp. 27, 28].
- [33.](#) *Пятнадцатый съезд ВКП(б)*, Т. 1, С. 285–286, 290–291 [Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b), Volume 1, pp. 285–286, 290–291].
- [34.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталинская школа фальсификаций*, С. 143 [Cf. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp. 108–109].



Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927

In front: Skrypnik, Stalin, Yaroslavsky; Behind Stalin's right shoulder: Bubnov



*On Podium at Fifteenth Congress in December 1927:
Andreev, Bubnov, Rykov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan*

49. The “Collectivization Congress” “Finishes Off” the Opposition

At the Fifteenth Congress, which opened on 2 December 1927, the Stalin-Bukharin Politburo came out with a program of gradually transforming the NEP in order to solve the problems of the socialist reconstruction of the national economy, to strengthen planning, and to limit the capitalist elements in both city and countryside. All these ideas, as well as certain practical measures taken on the eve of the congress (e.g., the announcement, in the Jubilee Manifesto of the Central Executive Committee, that 35 percent of the peasant households [the poorest social layers of the village] would be freed from paying the agricultural tax), were essentially taken from the Opposition platform.

By the time the congress opened, several variants of the draft of the first Five-Year-Plan had been worked out by the Supreme Council of the People's Economy and Gosplan. These drafts did not envision any substantial changes in the relationship between the state and private sectors of the economy. In industry, the proportion of the private sector over the five years was to have diminished from 14 to 9.5 percent, under conditions of an absolute growth of 24.8 percent. In 1931–1932, the proportion of the area under crops in the collective and state farms was to be 2.4 percent, and their share of the gross output in agriculture was to be 6.2 percent. The share of private capital in the village was to fall from 18.1 percent in 1926/27 to 10.4 percent in 1931/32.¹

The draft of the Five-Year Plan first worked out by Gosplan for 1926/27–1930/31 envisioned an increase of industrial production by 77 percent. Under the influence of the calculations of the Supreme Council of the People's Economy, in which emphasis was placed on production of the means of production, Gosplan raised the growth indicator to 108 percent for 1927/28–1931/32. Although these relatively modest tempos were motivated by the need to preserve the proportionality between accumulation and consumption, and to reject a maximum tempo of accumulation, nevertheless, even the personal consumption of industrial goods was to have grown, according to the first draft, by only 12 percent. Per capita consumption of cotton fabric in 1931 was to have reached 97 percent, and of cotton, 83 percent of the pre-war level. The extreme timidity of this conception of the Five-Year-Plan could best be seen by the fact that, upon its completion, the state budget was supposed to comprise only 16 percent of the national income, when even in tsarist Russia it made up 18 percent.

Trotsky would subsequently note:

The engineers and economists who created this plan were a few years later sternly punished in court as conscious wreckers who had acted on the instructions of a foreign power. If they had dared, the accused could have replied that their planning work corresponded to the “general line” of the Politburo at the time and was carried out under its direction.²

According to the calculations of the second, more “optimistic” Five-Year Plan drawn up by Gosplan, the production of coal, iron, and electro-energy in 1931/32 was to be seven to eleven times smaller than the level of production reached in the USA in 1913, and the number of the unemployed was to be reduced by only 10 percent in comparison with 1927.³

Both Five-Year Plans contained for 1930/31 a commodity deficit of 800–1500 billion rubles. The lessening of this disproportion and a reduction of the market imbalance was to be secured by means of raising apartment rents 2.5 times (as this was happening, the norm for per capita living space in the cities at the end of 1931 was to be lower than in 1926).

“To present on the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution such a narrow and thoroughly pessimistic plan,” the “Counter-Theses” of the Opposition declared, “means, in actual fact, to work against socialism.”⁴

In the Stalinist historical and party literature of subsequent years, the Fifteenth Congress was called the “Congress of Collectivization.” However, it is just as wrong to use this definition to characterize the content of this congress as it is to define the content of the Fourteenth Congress as the “Congress of Industrialization.” Insofar as the Fifteenth Congress was whole-heartedly devoted to “finishing off” the Opposition, the discussion of imminent changes in social and economic policy occupied a secondary place. The reports given by Rykov and Molotov were discussed rather hastily, and primarily local party officials spoke in the discussion periods. The idea of collectivization in these reports and in the decisions of the congress was formulated in the most general way as a policy for the distant future. Molotov said:

We know that the development of the individual farm along the path to socialism is a slow path, and a prolonged path. Many years are needed to go from individual to collective farming ... We know very well that the NEP itself — the so-called “New Economic Policy” — was a concession to the middle peasant, the small landowner, the petty farmer, who still prefers individual farming to collective farming. We have maintained this policy, we maintain it now, and we will maintain it as long as small peasant farms exist.⁵

“We cannot, of course, forget,” Molotov repeated in his concluding remarks, “that for the next years, our agriculture will develop mainly as a mass of small peasant farms.”⁶ The question of policy with regard to the kulak was expressed just as vaguely. Molotov tried to present matters as if posing the question of the “forced offensive” vis-à-vis the kulak introduced nothing new in the party’s agrarian policy:

When people now speak of a “forced offensive” against the kulak, against capitalist elements in the countryside and so forth, then it seems to me that they are saying nothing new with this formulation.⁷

The Fifteenth Congress displayed considerably more “resolve” in “finishing off” the Opposition than in working out its main political line. Of course, the Opposition’s “Counter-Theses” for the congress were not

discussed at it in any form. The few Oppositionists who had been included by a special decree of the Central Committee among delegates with a consulting vote were allowed onto the congress's tribune, but their contributions were relentlessly interrupted by shouts of derision which were intended to confuse the speaker and make it difficult to follow his arguments. In this regard, there occurred a virtual competition between the presidium and the audience.

The concluding part of Muralov's speech shows how upsetting the congress's behavior was to the Oppositionists who had already experienced the earlier slander:

Thus, all the questions which we have raised have been turned against us, using the most demagogic devices and slander. ... In the end, things have gone as far as applying the worst, harshest, and most unheard of forms of repression in the party against devoted, older members of the party, against revolutionaries ... (Voices: "Tell us, how did you organize your conference?" "How did the opposition organize its monstrous actions?")... who have proved their devotion to the revolution not with slander, but with deeds; now they have been accused of being agents of Chamberlain. (Loud noise. Voices: "You, Mensheviks, are traitors to the working class"). Then they tried to tie us to the Wrangel officers. (Voices: "You tied yourselves!")

Comrades, if they told any one of you that you had killed your wife, eaten your own grandfather and torn off the head of your grandmother (Voice: "Enough of making a mockery of the congress and wasting the congress's time with such absurd discussions!"), how would you feel, and how would you prove that it hadn't happened? (Loud commotion. Cries: "Down with him! Chairman, put it to a vote!")⁸

In order to create the impression that the "working masses" supported the reprisals against the Opposition, the organizers of the congress used well-prepared speeches by delegations from the major factories. The character of these speeches can be illustrated by the greetings to the congress brought by a delegate from "the red metal-workers of Stalingrad." He said:

When the workers of Stalingrad learned that some kind of opposition had formed, we thought that maybe this was something people drink with their tea, but when we looked into it and thought more deeply, — no, comrades, it is leading us in absolutely the wrong direction. Therefore the workers, without



*Nikolai Muralov
(1877–1937)*



*Trotsky whispering in Muralov's ear at the
Fifteenth Congress. Caricature by M. L.
Belotsky*

hinking long, filled up their Marten's furnace with steel and rolled out a certain tool. And here, comrades, I am giving the Fifteenth Congress our gift (he opens a case and takes a steel broom, which he shows to the assembled delegates. Stormy applause.). Let this tool serve the Fifteenth Congress, and those who think that perhaps this is a silly broom are making a mistake. If there is an Opposition here, then it can vouch for the fact that this is a steel broom, and a mean one at that (stormy applause).

And the metal-workers of Stalingrad hope that the Fifteenth Congress will sweep away the Opposition with this unforgiving broom (applause)...

Long live our comrade Stalin, the favorite of Stalingraders! (Cries of "Hurrah," stormy applause).²

Khrushchev would later recall in his memoirs about this episode at the congress:

One delegation gave a steel broom to the presidium of the congress. Rykov, who was chairing, took the broom and said: "I give this broom to Comrade

Stalin, let him use it to sweep away our enemies.” This was greeted at the time by stormy applause, laughter, and Rykov was smiling. Later, when Rykov became a victim of this broom, I recalled his words, and the way they had been said.^{[10](#)}

The “minimal” demand that was placed by the congress before the members of the Opposition was the demand to renounce their views. Both in the months before the congress and in the first days of the congress, the leaders of the Opposition stubbornly refused. On 3 December, the Congress Presidium received a declaration from 121 members of the Opposition, which spoke of the end of factional activity and a categorical rejection of any move to form a second party. In addition, the declaration stated:

We cannot renounce the views that we are certain are correct and which we have outlined before the party in our platform and in our theses. ... We will work for the party in the future, defending our views within the strict framework of the party’s statutes and resolutions, which is the right of every Bolshevik, set down in a number of basic congress resolutions during Lenin’s lifetime and after his death.^{[11](#)}

This declaration was signed by several dozen Oppositionists who had already been expelled from the party (including Trotsky and Zinoviev), who appealed to the congress to be readmitted to the party.

After passing a resolution on the Central Committee’s report, which reaffirmed the “minimal” demands on the Opposition, the congress listened to Ordzhonikidze’s commission, which had been set up “for a careful study of all documents related to the activity of the Trotskyist Opposition.”^{[12](#)} The commission received two declarations from the leaders of the Opposition. The first of these, signed by Muralov, Rakovsky, and Radek, repeated the basic points of the 3 December declaration and once again expressed the conviction that “each one of us, within the party statutes, can defend before the party the views which are outlined in our platform and theses.”^{[13](#)} The second declaration, signed by Kamenev, Bakaev, and Avdeev, said that the congress resolution banning the propagation of Opposition views “is accepted by all of us to be

carried out.”¹⁴ In this way, the Zinoviev group declared its complete capitulation while the congress was still in session.

Stating with satisfaction that the Opposition bloc “was starting to crack,” Ordzhonikidze spoke for the commission in calling both of these declarations completely unsatisfactory, insofar as they did not contain “either an ideological or organizational laying down of arms” by the Opposition. After Ordzhonikidze’s speech, Smilga read out one more declaration (speaking for himself, Muralov, Rakovsky, and Radek) which said, among other things:

We reject the fact that the opposition is called “Trotskyist,” since it is based on attempts to associate artificially and arbitrarily the most important questions of our epoch with long since liquidated pre-revolutionary disagreements in which the majority of us were not involved. We stand fully and completely on the historical foundations of Bolshevism.

We are being expelled *for our views*. They are outlined in our platform and theses. We consider these views Bolshevik and Leninist. We cannot renounce them, for the course of events will prove them correct. ... The party regime which has directed our expulsion is now leading ineluctably to greater fragmentation of the party and to new expulsions.¹⁵

On the basis of the conclusions made by Ordzhonikidze’s commission, the congress passed a resolution, “On the Opposition,” which confirmed the expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party, and other Oppositionists from the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. The resolution also announced the expulsion from the party of seventy-five of the most active members of the “Trotskyist Opposition” and twenty-three members of the Sapronov group, which was called “blatantly counter-revolutionary” (the members of this group submitted no declarations of any kind to the congress).

The day after this resolution was passed, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and twenty-one other members of the Zinoviev group sent a declaration to the Congress Presidium, which condemned their own views as anti-Leninist and declared the subordination of their will and their views “to the will and views of the party, for it is ... the only supreme judge of what is useful or harmful for the victorious movement of the revolution.”¹⁶ In response to this statement, the congress passed one more resolution,

which registered its unwillingness to consider the document “since the Fifteenth Congress has already exhausted the question of the Opposition.”¹⁷ It also proposed that the Central Committee and Central Control Commission accept statements made by active members of the Opposition who had been expelled from the party on an individual basis and make decisions regarding these statements only six months after they had been submitted.

The Fifteenth Congress completed the process of crushing open ideological inner-party discussions and any independent or unfettered thought within the party. The expulsion of the leaders of the “United Opposition” signified the elimination from the party of people who were capable of opposing the adventuristic zigzags and voluntaristic improvisations made by Stalin and his cohorts. Such an outcome of the open inner-party discussion led to a weakening and lowering of the role of the party, and even the branches of the apparatus, in the working out of a political line. All that remained for the rank-and-file party members was to carry out the many political directives and maneuvers conceived and declared by the Politburo, the basic core of which, henceforth, was unquestionably subservient to Stalin.

For this reason, all the subsequent unprecedented reversals in Stalin’s policies, including the transition to complete forced collectivization, were carried out without ideological, organizational, and political preparation at party congresses or plenums of the Central Committee. The methods of fighting against dissident voices — methods elevated to the norms of party life and “verified” in the struggle with all post-Leninist legal oppositions — not only eliminated the possibility that the party could discuss new problems engendered by changes in the relationship of class forces or by the voluntaristic political improvisations of the Stalin leadership, but also determined the explanation of all real difficulties and problems in the future — as the activity of the “class enemy” and his “agents” inside the party.

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- [6.](#) Там же, С. 1382 [*Ibid*, p. 1382].
- [7.](#) Там же, С. 1207 [*Ibid*, p. 1207].
- [8.](#) Пятнадцатый съезд ВКП(б), Стенографический отчет, 1928, С. 308 [*Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, 1928, p. 308].
- [9.](#) Там же, С. 26 [*Ibid*, pp. 26].
- [10.](#) *Вопросы истории*, 1990, № 2, С. 89 [*Questions of History*, 1990, № 2, p. 89].
- [11.](#) Пятнадцатый съезд ВКП(б), Т. 2, С. 1597 [*Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b)*, Volume 2, p. 1597].
- [12.](#) Там же, С. 1389 [*Ibid*, p. 1389].
- [13.](#) Там же, С. 1600 [*Ibid*, p. 1600].
- [14.](#) Там же, С. 1599 [*Ibid*, p. 1599].
- [15.](#) Там же, С. 1399 [*Ibid*, p. 1399].
- [16.](#) Там же, С. 1417 [*Ibid*, p. 1417].
- [17.](#) Там же, С. 1470 [*Ibid*, p. 1470].



*Members of United Opposition in 1927
Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev*



*Members of Left Opposition
Sitting: Serebriakov, Radek, Trotsky, Boguslavsky, Preobrazhensky
Standing: Rakovsky, Drobniis, Beloborodov, Sosnovsky*

Conclusion

In recent years, enormous changes have occurred in the ideological life of our country. Works have been republished, or published for the first time, that had been forbidden for many decades. Numerous archival documents have been published that earlier had been inaccessible even for specialists. However, publications of this kind, clearing the way for an authentic understanding of our history, often are outweighed by the flood of anti-communist journalism gushing out onto our book, newspaper, and magazine market. For the Soviet reader who has lived for many years on meager Stalin-Suslov ideological rations, it is extremely difficult today to digest the enormous flood of publications about the history of Soviet society, to separate the wheat from the chaff. In addition, the unusual dynamism of our times does not facilitate the appearance of serious historical investigations. Their place is taken by journalistic essays, which, as a rule, appeal not to the mind of the reader, but to his emotions, and not to the highest ones at that.

The more the destructive consequences of the movement toward the restoration of capitalist relations became clear, the more vigorously yesterday's "perestroika men" replaced their appeals for de-Stalinization and socialist revival with appeals to renounce the ideological heritage of Marxism, and the more shamelessly they falsified the history of the Soviet state, particularly the first years of its existence.

This book aims to return to the reader the dramatic pages of the first post-October decade; to show that Stalinism was not a continuation, but a negation of the entire cause of Bolshevism, a negation that carved its

way in the struggle against the mass movement within the party that promoted a genuine socialist alternative for the development of socialist society.

In viewing the course and outcome of the inner-party struggle of 1922–1927, it is not difficult to see that the Bolshevik and Stalinist party and political regimes were not only different, but directly opposed to each other.

Under Lenin, the freedom to express a real variety of opinions existed in the party, and in carrying out political decisions, consideration was given to the positions of not only the majority, but a minority in the party. All subsequent upper-echelon blocs crudely violated this party tradition, ignored the warnings and proposals of their opponents, and replaced a polemic with them by attaching false political labels. They then drove the Opposition from the party on falsified charges, in many ways anticipating the charges of the Moscow Trials of 1936–1938.

Starting in 1923, all the most important political decisions were, in fact, made not by party congresses, not even by plenums of its Central Committee, but were pre-decided by unofficial, conspiratorial bodies (“troika,” “semyorka” [“Seven”], “parallel CC,” etc.), that imposed on the party a regime of their own factional dictatorship. The unprincipled foundation on which all these narrow oligarchic groups united, pre-determined their disintegration at every new turn of events and the formation of new upper-echelon blocs, which drove a segment of their recent allies into a new opposition. Reprisals against the latter, in turn, cleared the way for the regime of Stalin’s unlimited personal power.

In viewing the beginning and end points of this process, we are convinced of the opposition of two epochs — the Bolshevik and the Stalinist, which is also expressed in the relationship between the party and its leader. Lenin’s leadership was, most of all, grounded in his ideological authority in the party. The true nature of this authority can be seen in the fact that, in secret elections to the CC at party congresses, Lenin invariably received 100 percent of the votes. As Trotsky wrote in his work, *Stalin*:¹

Lenin's authority, however, was not absorbed with mother's milk, nor was it instilled by school textbooks or church sermons. Every Bolshevik, from Lenin's closest collaborators to a provincial worker, should have become convinced, on the basis of innumerable discussions, political events and actions, of the superiority of Lenin's ideas and methods.²

Given this authority, however, Lenin was never seen by the party as a charismatic leader. Charisma, i.e., total power and the cult of a "leader" who, as official propaganda claimed, was endowed with a special gift of foresight and who never allowed any mistakes in his judgment or actions, grew as the ever newer members of Lenin's Politburo became cut off from the leadership and the party. As they became concentrated in the Politburo, these figures were united on the basis of personal devotion to Stalin. As this was happening, the officially proclaimed "monolithic nature" of the party masked an ever more factual differentiation into people who hated and despised the "leader"; into others, whose blind faith in Stalin's infallibility was combined with demoralization and intimidation; and finally, into those who vied with each other in flattery and obsequiousness out of self-seeking, careerist considerations.

Under Lenin, "the principle of personal leadership was absolutely unknown in the party. It singled out the most popular individual figures in the leadership, surrounded them with trust and admiration, but grew accustomed to know that leadership came from the Central Committee."³ This tradition was skillfully used by Stalin and his allies. In the first stages of the inner-party struggle, they counterposed the authority of the Central Committee to the personal authority of Trotsky and other leaders of the Opposition, and demanded from every party member — under fear of expulsion from the party and, consequently, destruction of one's career — unqualified support for any decisions of "the Leninist CC" (but in fact, of the majority of the Politburo, who manipulated the Central Committee). Only when the possibility of any discussions or opposition in the party had been eliminated, was this tradition cast aside and replaced with the cult of Stalin, which was assuming ever more hideous forms; 80 to 90 percent of the members of the Central Committee elected

at the Sixth through the Seventeenth Congresses were physically annihilated.

In a certain sense, one can say that Stalinism grew out of the old Bolshevik Party, for new formations do not fall from the sky, but are nourished by the formations of the preceding period. But in the old Bolshevik Party there were three elements: the revolutionary dynamics of the proletarian vanguard, centralized organization, and Marxist doctrine. From all three of these elements, Stalinism inherited only the centralized organization, switching it over from the class struggle of the proletariat to the social interests of the new ruling layer. The forms, traditions, phraseology, and banners to some degree remained the old ones, but this outer shell deceived superficial glances.⁴

The use by Stalinism of Marxist phraseology made it difficult to see the radical change in political doctrine. The repetition by official propaganda of traditional formulas about the leading role of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so forth, camouflaged the change of the social functions of state power, which had become an instrument for suppressing the working class no less than the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

The sole element of the Bolshevik Party that was preserved — the centralized organization — also underwent radical changes, insofar as it ceased to be guided by the initiative of the party masses. Under Lenin, when the main organizational principle of Bolshevism was the principle of democratic centralism,

the party, under conditions of the greatest difficulties, grandiose shifts and upheavals, whatever the vacillations were to one side or the other, preserved the necessary balance of the elements of democracy and centralism. The best test of this balance was the historical fact that the party absorbed into itself the proletarian vanguard, that this vanguard was able through democratic mass organization such as the trade unions, and then the Soviets, to draw behind it the entire class and, even more so, the entire toiling masses of the nation. This great historical achievement would not be possible without a combination of the broadest democracy, which gives expression to the feelings and thoughts of the broadest masses, with centralism, which guarantees firm leadership.⁵

Defeat of the Left Opposition, which was steadfastly fighting for preserving the balance between democracy and centralism, led to the

complete destruction of democratic elements in party life. Such an outcome of the inner-party struggle was not the logical result of Lenin's organizational principles of party building, as anti-communist historiography claims, but the political result of the social degeneration of the party, which turned into an organ of defending the selfish interests of the bureaucracy. Exaggerated centralism became an instrument of the bureaucracy's self-defense against the popular masses, from whom the bureaucracy had usurped power.

Revolutionary centralism became bureaucratic centralism; the apparatus, which cannot and dares not appeal to the masses in order to resolve internal conflicts, is forced to seek a higher authority above itself. Thus, bureaucratic centralism inevitably leads to personal dictatorship.⁶

The opposite nature of two social-political regimes — Bolshevik and Stalinist — finds, as it were, a mirror reflection in the opposite nature of the political profiles of Lenin and Stalin.

The first radical difference between them was related to ideological principles and to the masses.

An indestructible fidelity to principles and a belief in the masses were traits that Lenin truly bore with him throughout his entire life, despite the flexibility and maneuverability of his policies. In both of these regards, Stalin was the direct opposite of Lenin, his negation, and, if one is allowed to say it, his profanation. For him, principles were never anything but a cover. Never in the course of his whole life did he have contact with the actual masses, i.e., not with tens, but hundreds of thousands. ... He had neither the organs nor the resources for such contact, and from his inability to "communicate with the masses" and directly influence them, grew his fear of the masses, and then his hostility to them.⁷

These qualities in Stalin answered the social interests of the bureaucracy, for whom alienation from the masses was the condition of their existence.

Since the entire Soviet oligarchy, as well as any bureaucracy in general, is an organized and centralized mediocrity, then the personal qualities of Stalin coincided in a way that could not be better, with the basic traits of the bureaucracy: its fear of the masses, from whom it came and whom it betrayed, and its hatred for anything that is superior.⁸

In a country that had passed through the October Revolution, showing the true strength of the revolutionary masses, a totalitarian regime was required in order to crush these masses.

A second fundamental difference between Lenin and Stalin was their attitude toward power.

Lenin very much valued power as an instrument of action. But a pure love of power, the struggle for power, were absolutely foreign to him (As is clear from the whole context of Trotsky's arguments, he is talking here about personal power, power over the party and its other leaders. – V. R.). For Stalin psychologically, however, power always stood apart from all the tasks which it should serve. The will of the state over others was a mainspring in his personality.⁹

Closely tied to this fundamental difference was a third difference between Lenin and Stalin: their moral coloration and the orientation of their political irreconcilability. Lenin's irreconcilability bore within itself nothing personal. It was directed against ideas and actions that were hostile to him, and not against individuals. For this reason, it was completely absent elements of guile, vindictiveness, and pretentiousness. This irreconcilability was organically combined with toleration and patience toward comrades in the party, even at moments of sharp political arguments with him.

With Lenin, firmness and irreconcilability flowed from great historical perspectives. These qualities were directed at big problems; personal conflicts flowed only from these big problems. And as soon as Lenin secured the political triumph of his ideas, he displayed the greatest flexibility ... in the realm of personal relations. In contrast, common ideas for Stalin were always merely a dressing, garnish, or a supplement to several empirical, immediate goals. It was precisely in pursuit of these practical goals, always imbued with a personal element, that Stalin displayed the greatest irreconcilability, passing later into out-and-out brutality."¹⁰

What, then, were the objective and subjective factors in the victory of Stalinism over Bolshevism, or, more narrowly, of the victory of Stalin over his ideological opponents, to whom he was inferior in intellect, erudition, culture, oratorical skills, and other qualities needed to be the leader of a revolutionary party? We will find the answer to this question

only if we take into account that Stalin's victory was not only his personal victory. In the inner-party struggle, what triumphed were definite social forces, bearers of an enormous bureaucratic reaction against the October Revolution. Stalinism grew out of the gradually developing omnipotence of the party apparatus, which had assumed the right to decide for the party and was inclined to cruel administrative measures against those below it, and obsequiousness to those above it. To the extent that the bureaucracy was rising above society and above the party, Stalin was rising above the bureaucracy, which needed its crowning in the person of the "leader."

Precisely because Stalinism grew not on the soil prepared by the October Revolution and the entire past history of Bolshevism, it was compelled to carve a road for itself in the bitter struggle with the forces in the party who were defending the Bolshevik political, ideological, and moral principles that were being destroyed by the bureaucratism of the apparatus.

An unbiased study of the inner-party struggle overturns the current narrow-minded conceptions that all of Lenin's comrades were "tarred with the same brush"; to an equal degree they fought not for principles, but for personal power, and therefore any outcome of this struggle would lead to the establishment of a totalitarian regime. On the contrary, the party would have been able to subordinate to itself and restructure its apparatus, if, in its striving to refashion inner-party relations, it had not collided with resistance from a significant segment of the ruling higher-ups. The latter had passed through a period of political and moral degeneration and had suppressed not only Trotsky, but also many other recognized leaders of Bolshevism.

Subjective factors that left their mark on the course and outcome of the inner-party struggle have always played a complex role in the history of revolutionary movements. Lenin paid attention to the fact that, during splits in the workers' movement, political disagreements frequently took the form of desperately contentious group conflicts.

Not a single one of the principled struggles within the Social Democratic movement was able to avoid, *anywhere in the world*, a number of personal and

organizational conflicts ... People are people, and without “contentious” material, without “squabbling,” none of the historical clashes of various currents have ever taken place: the clash between the Marxist and anarchist trends (Marx and Bakunin), between the Guesdist and the Jaurèsist, between the Lassallean and Eisenach trends, etc.

Those who want to draw lessons from the history of the workers’ movement are called upon to study this historical experience:

It is possible and necessary to learn it, if only by studying the historical role of the great leaders of the working-class movement — to distinguish between the “conflict” side of the struggle of *ideas*, of the struggle of trends, and that aspect of it which is a matter of principle.¹¹

Victor Hugo wrote about analogous historical lessons flowing from a study of the Great French Revolution in his book, *Ninety-Three*:

To be able to distinguish an ideological movement from a movement generated by personal craving, to support the first and fight against the second — herein lies all the genius, all the valor, of great revolutionaries.¹²

It was precisely such genius and valor that was not displayed in 1922–1924 by the majority in the Politburo, who imposed on the party their regime of factional dictatorship, thereby clearing the way for Stalin’s ascendancy.

In the first period, he himself was caught by surprise by his own rise. He stepped uncertainly, looking around, always prepared to retreat. But Zinoviev and Kamenev, as well as Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsy in part, supported and encouraged him as a counterweight to me. Not one of them thought at the time that Stalin would outstrip them.¹³

In promoting Stalin in those years, “the most zeal was invariably displayed by Zinoviev: he had in tow behind him his future executioner.”¹⁴ All of these people proved to be unequal to their historical task. In the period when they held the levers of power and were on equal footing with Stalin, they irresponsibly played with the bogeymen of “Trotskyism” and “factionalism”; they applied the methods of political intrigue in the struggle against their ideological opponents, placing their personal and group interests higher than the interests of the party and the revolution.

Stalin — a genius at political provocation — skillfully used all these moments, setting some leaders against others, playing on their personal ambitions and stirring up personal hostility between them. But his allies — politicians who were sufficiently familiar with the historical lessons of earlier revolutions — nevertheless, in their factional blindness, did not want to see where the road they were paving, with their secret moves and upper-echelon combinations, was leading. And in any case, they did not imagine that the apparatus mechanism that they were unleashing would, in the end, strike merciless blows against themselves.

All these subjective factors, which worked in Stalin's favor, were supplemented with Stalin's skillful use of his apparatus power to select and promote people personally devoted to him.

Stalin measured every situation, every political circumstance, every combination of people against himself, his struggle for power, his striving to rule over others. If he was not up to the matter intellectually, he caused a clash between two of the strongest competitors. The art of using personal or group antagonisms was raised by him to a great height. In this respect, he developed an almost unerring instinct. ...¹⁵ With unerring instinct and untiring persistence, he always, on every occasion, under any pretext, did whatever might cause difficulty for another rival who was stronger; on the other hand, with almost the same persistence, he tried to reward support and any act of personal loyalty.¹⁶

Possessing an unsurpassed ability to play on the base aspects of human nature, Stalin unmistakably began to sense a yearning in the milieu of the bureaucracy to enjoy the material blessings of life. Superficially preserving the traits of asceticism in his own everyday life (the many luxurious dachas [countryside homes], extravagant receptions and drinking-bouts would become a permanent attribute of Stalin's way of life only in the 1930s), he met these self-interested aspirations, invariably broadening the scale of the material benefits connected with the possession of responsible posts.

Choosing his protégés according to their personal loyalty, Stalin taught them how to master the mechanics of power, to use the weaknesses of their colleagues, to set the latter against each other, and so forth. All these bureaucratic mechanics, in which no small role was

played by personal intrigue, he subordinated to the task of creating a privileged caste, ever more estranged from the people and striving to hold the masses in submission. The political and everyday degeneration of the ruling layer changed its morals and allowed Stalin to acquire ever greater confidence and display ever greater ruthlessness in the fight against his opponents. “Stalin systematically corrupted the apparatus. In response, the apparatus unbridled its leader.”¹⁷

A reaction to these processes became political differentiation in the ranks of the old party guard, the separation from it of a significant segment that had fought against the degeneration occurring in their own midst. The leaders and ideologists of the Left Opposition were

people of the same layer, of the same ruling milieu, of the same privileged bureaucracy, who abandoned the ranks (of the bureaucracy – V. R.) in order to bind their fate to the fate of the sans-culottes, the impoverished proletarians, the village poor.¹⁸

The implantation of a new system of social inequality and privileges became a key factor in the degeneration of Bolshevism into Stalinism. The axis of the social program of the bureaucracy in its conflict with the Opposition, which was resisting this process, became the struggle against social equality. This struggle was facilitated by the fact that it proceeded during the years of the NEP, which by its nature presupposed the growth of profound social differences that excessively devalued in the consciousness of the masses the basic social gains of the revolution — nationalization of the means of production and the land.

Of course, the causes of “Soviet Thermidor” do not lie concealed in the very nature of the NEP, but were bound up with a wider accumulation of domestic political issues and international factors, which were reviewed in this book. However, pointing to the coincidence in time of the NEP period and the period of crushing the Left Opposition is important for overturning common representations of the NEP as the brightest page in the history of Soviet society. While showing the invalidity of this newest historical myth, Andrei Sinyavsky, whom one can by no means suspect of being sympathetic to communism, wrote correctly about the NEP years:

As we know, this was a comparatively peaceful and prosperous period, allowing the people to breathe relatively freely and nourish themselves somewhat. At the same time, it was a time of routing any oppositions and creating a powerful Stalinist consolidation, a time of the revolution's degeneration, as it were, into its opposite, into a conservative, petty-bourgeois, bureaucratic organization. It is a fact worthy of amazement, that during the NEP years, many heroes of the revolution proved to be cowards, time-servers, submissive executors of the new state system, philistines, and conformists. Does this mean that they had not been genuine heroes in the recent past? No, undoubtedly they were heroes, they faced death and feared nothing. But the historical climate had changed, and it was as if they had fallen into another environment, demanding different qualities in men; and yet, at the same time, it was as if they found themselves in their own environment of the victorious revolution. And so, if yesterday's heroes do not perish, they turn into run-of-the-mill officials.¹⁹

While fully agreeing with the characterization of these social and political processes, let us note the illegitimacy of Sinyavsky's bringing into close proximity the oppositions of the 1920s with the dissidents of the 1960s–1980s. In its historical significance and consequences, the inner-party struggle of the 1920s was much more sweeping than the activity of the dissidents during the period of stagnation. The program of the Left Opposition was immeasurably wider and more scientific than the program of the dissident movement. One could even say that the latter did not even have an integral program, for the views of its two ideological leaders — Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn — differed profoundly. Finally, the price paid by the Oppositionists of the 1920s for their ideas and actions was much more terrible than that which fell to the lot of most dissidents of the recent past.

The change in the “historical climate” noted by Sinyavsky had deep social and class foundations. The first years of the revolution were marked by tendencies to level out the material living conditions between the “higher” and “lower” segments of the party, between Communists and those outside the party. But this was the leveling out of poverty caused by the civil war, foreign intervention, and blockade. As Lenin wrote in the transition to the NEP:

Our too-hurried, straight-line and unprepared “communism” was caused by the war and the impossibility of obtaining goods or getting our factories going.^{[20](#)}

This “communism,” which came to be called “war communism,” served as the moral justification for the cruel measures of surplus produce appropriation and the struggle against speculation, conducted for the sake of guaranteeing what was most necessary for the army and the starving cities. In those years, the rank-and-file members and leaders of the party shared material hardships and deprivations with the people. It is no accident that for many decades, images of the proletarian puritanism of that time filled the popular imagination as examples of revolutionary justice: modest pay and meager rations for people’s commissars, and the utmost self-restraint of Bolshevik leaders when it came to life’s material benefits.

Liquidation of the state of emergency and the transition to the New Economic Policy, which affirmed a course toward strengthening material interests in the results of labor, posed anew the questions of social justice. After a prolonged period of wars, which had exhausted to the utmost the productive forces of the country, it was not possible to count on the rapid satisfaction of even the elementary needs of all members of society. In these conditions, the struggle for necessary consumer goods inevitably had to reappear. Connected with this was the revival of speculative and self-seeking tendencies. At the same time, it became clear that measures stipulated by the party program to establish principles of a “semi-state,” to develop socialist self-management, and to set up popular control over labor and consumption could not be fully realized. This was due to the extremely low cultural level of the great bulk of the population. The creation of a special apparatus of power and management, one of the functions of which was the regulation of inequality in the realm of consumption, was filled with the danger that a privileged officialdom would be reborn. For this reason, the entire Leninist period of the country’s post-October development was marked by a search for and implementation of social and political guarantees directed against the growth of material privileges connected with the possession of power.

This course, outlined in the decisions of the Ninth Conference and Tenth Congress of the VKP(b), and then confirmed for the last time by party resolutions in 1923–1924,²¹ began to be consistently and methodically undermined to the extent that Stalinism was established.

In the NEP years, the consolidation of the privileged position of the bureaucracy went hand in hand with the creation of favorable conditions for the personal accumulation of the new bourgeoisie in town and country. Both the Bolshevik Party and its opponents unambiguously viewed the NEP as a concession to the development of capitalist relations. However, power in this situation remained in the hands of the same people who had led the October Revolution. This power limited the development of capitalist relations within a framework that did not destroy the socioeconomic foundations of the new social order: the nationalization of the major means of production, the banks, and the land; the monopoly of foreign trade; and the planning element in managing the economy. By itself, therefore, the introduction of the NEP, despite the rebirth and revitalization of capitalist elements in the cities and countryside, did not signify the onset of Thermidor.

For the first time, the problem of the Thermidorian and Bonapartist degeneration of the Soviet regime was raised by Lenin in the transition to NEP. In evaluating its perspectives, Lenin wrote in the draft of a report on the tax-in-kind: “Thermidor? Soberly, *could it happen?* Yes. Will it? We will see.”²² In drawing the lessons of the Kronstadt rebellion, Lenin clearly pointed to the alternative confronting Soviet Russia:

Ten to twenty years of correct relations with the peasantry and victory secured on a world scale (even with the delay of the proletarian revolutions that are maturing), or twenty to forty years of the ordeals of White-Guard terror. Aut-aut. Tertium non datur.²³ (Either-or. A third is not given. – V. R.).

In fact, the second alternative was realized, but in a peculiar historical form not foreseen by Lenin. Terror, which was White-Guardist in its class essence, i.e., directed against Bolshevik-Leninists, was carried out not by open White-Guardists who had come to power and restored the old class relations, but by a Stalinist clique that had usurped the power of the

working class, while preserving certain social foundations laid down by the October Revolution.

The precondition for “Soviet Thermidor” became the crystallization of a new ruling stratum of regime professionals who occupied a privileged position and covered themselves with the idea of socialism before the masses. This layer strove to perpetuate their existence, consolidating and justifying both their monopoly on power as well as their growing material privileges. This striving found ideological and practical expression in the struggle against social equality, which initially was combined with serious concessions to the upper layers of the countryside. Laws that legalized leasing the land and employing hired labor in agriculture went significantly further than the early conceptions of the NEP.

The struggle of the ruling faction against the Left Opposition, which was waged in this period under the slogans of defending the interests of the peasants as the free commodity producers and sellers of agricultural production, found support from the remnants of the old ruling classes and their ideological representatives.

They naturally lay hold of the peasant as a last hope. They could not hope for any kind of immediate success and clearly understood that they would have to pass through a period of defending the peasantry.²⁴ Together they constituted the army of Thermidor. Not a single one of these groups, however, could openly raise their heads. They all needed the protective coloration of the ruling party and traditional Bolshevism.²⁵

The struggle against equality united the bureaucracy with the petty bourgeoisie in the cities and countryside, insofar as inequality was the social basis and meaning of existence for this tacit alliance.

The bureaucracy went very far toward the interests of this tacit alliance. But by 1927, it finally became clear what every literate economist knew even earlier, that the pretensions of the bourgeois ally were essentially limitless. The kulak wanted to have full ownership of the land. The kulak wanted to have the right to freely dispose of his entire harvest. The kulak strove to create his own agents in the city in the form of a free trader or free manufacturer. The kulak did not want to tolerate compulsory grain procurements at fixed prices. The

kulak, along with the petty trader, along with the manufacturer, strove for a full restoration of capitalism.²⁶

A. Avtorkhanov also wrote about the real perspectives of capitalist restoration, although he falsely evaluated it as an expression of the strivings of the entire population of the country:

Having become a country of the NEP, Russia intended to take one more step — to make itself a capitalist country. Here, Trotsky stood in the way.²⁷

Until 1928, the Left Opposition assumed that the kulak in the countryside and the Nepman in the city, who were strengthening their economic positions, would be able, in an alliance with the bureaucracy, “to bring under their complete control” the social gains of the October Revolution. That is why they advanced the slogan of fighting against the Nepman, kulak, and bureaucrat, as social forces capable of turning the country’s development onto a capitalist path. However, the fate of “Soviet Thermidor” unfolded in a different way. Concessions to the petty-bourgeoisie were kept for much less time than their initiators, and Stalin most of all, had anticipated. It very soon became clear that these concessions not only did not induce the kulak to voluntarily sell his produce to the state at fixed prices, but, on the contrary, roused in him the certainty that the state was vacillating and that it was necessary to apply pressure to achieve full freedom of trade turnover. The upper layers of the village in 1927 had already grown their economic power so much that they could risk a “grain strike,” which placed the city under the threat of a grain blockade and the Soviet Union on the verge of a crisis.

The empirical reaction of the bureaucracy to the string of “grain strikes” was Stalin’s ultra-left zigzag in 1928/29, which liquidated the NEP and grew over, through the policy of extraordinary measures, into forced collectivization, costing the country immeasurable material and human sacrifices. This adventuristic zigzag led to the establishment of unlimited power of the bureaucracy in town and country. Having taken the path of a frontal confrontation, not only with the kulak, but with the entire peasantry, the bureaucracy changed its social base. It now became an enormous and motley “army,” consisting of

people of the philistine type, who had remained on the sidelines during the tempestuous epoch of the revolution, but now, when they had become convinced of the stability of the Soviet state, were trying to join it by taking official positions, if not in the center, then in the provinces.²⁸

In all the zigzags of its socioeconomic course, the ruling faction was consistent in the ever greater toughening of the political, and in particular, of the party regime. The Bolshevik Party “in its old form, with its old traditions and old membership, came ever more into contradiction with the interests of the new ruling stratum.”²⁹ The virtual strangulation of this party, accomplished by driving out its Left Opposition, was the political essence of Soviet Thermidor. The expulsion of the Left Opposition and liquidation of any possibility of legal oppositions and discussions opened the unobstructed road to any adventuristic actions of Stalin’s oligarchy, which in another two or three years, after driving out the last members of Lenin’s Politburo (“the Bukharin troika”), acquired full political homogeneity. Bureaucratic centrism made up the social and political essence of the policies of this oligarchy; while it did not reject the economic foundations laid down by the October Revolution (nationalization of the means of production and a planned economy), it deformed them to the utmost in the service of the new privileged stratum. Bureaucratic centrism remained the political course of not only Stalin, but of every one of the subsequent party “leaders,” who, despite all the differences of their individual political physiognomies, continued to carry out Stalin’s line of replacing the power of the party, Soviets, and trade unions with the power of the party-state apparatus.

All this had a devastating effect most of all on the fate of the party, which, for the regime of personal power of Stalin and his successors (right up to Gorbachev), retained value only as a submissive base of support for the bureaucracy. The limitations of inner-party democracy, presented at first as a necessary tribute to extreme historical circumstances, grew into the complete destruction of the democratic principles of organizing party life. The party masses were removed from controlling the party and nation. Obedience was recognized as the main virtue of a party member, the unquestioning adherence to all the

contradictory zigzags of the irremovable leadership. A hierarchy of party secretaries began to rule over the party without limit. The functions of party organizations were usurped by the apparatus, who were condescending toward those below them, and servile toward the leader. The only source of personal power became inseparable ties with the apparatus. The consequence of all these changes was the transformation of the organs of the state from servants of society into lords over it; Lenin had seen this as the basic danger confronting the socialist revolution.

All these traits of the party-political regime were preserved in the years of Stalinist terror, and in the years of Khrushchev's "thaw," and in the years of Brezhnev's "stagnation." Finally, the innumerable zigzags and failures of "perestroika," in our opinion, are explained by the fact that the relations between basic social-political institutions were not subjected to genuine socialist reconstruction: the regime of personal power, the system of party-state bureaucratic-apparatus management, and other state and social institutions. The result of this became the crisis of the entire political system, which ended in the most unfavorable and tragic outcome: the disintegration of the USSR and the seizure of power in the "sovereign states" that arose on its ruins, by bureaucratic cliques oriented to the restoration of capitalism and, in the majority of cases, headed by completely degenerated apparatchiks.

Historical lessons from the past can and should be drawn as a result of elucidating the true content of three ideological, political tendencies: Bolshevism, Stalinism, and "Trotskyism." The splitting of the Bolshevik Party into "Trotskyism" and Stalinism, and the victory of the latter, resulted in a chain of lost opportunities for genuine socialist development. However, an unbiased historical analysis confirms the correctness of the idea expressed by the Soviet historian, Mikhail Gelfer:

Lost opportunities are not a wasteland; they exist (materially!) and "work" either in favor of people or against them, depending on whether people cast aside the past as an excess burden they cannot bear, or look deeply into it in order to see themselves there — in the future.^{[30](#)}

1. Here and on later pages we refer to *Stalin*, the last (unfinished) book by Trotsky. Work on the book was broken off due to the assassination of its author. The biography demonstrates the logic of Trotsky's reflections on the reasons for the world-historical tragedy — the replacement of Bolshevism with Stalinism — reasons which we find extremely convincing. Therefore we have decided to compare the conclusions of the investigation we have undertaken with several results of these reflections, or, to reinforce and refine our conclusion with the last assessments and judgments made by Trotsky.

2. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 139 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 679–680].

3. Там же, С. 198–199 [Cf. Ibid., p. 678].

4. Там же, С. 180 [Cf. Ibid., p. 681].

5. Там же, С. 140 [Cf. Ibid., pp. 675–676].

6. Там же, С. 140–141 [Cf. Ibid., p. 676].

7. Там же, С. 149 [Cf. Ibid., p. 762].

8. Там же, С. 252 [Cf. Ibid., p. 573].

9. Там же, С. 159 [Cf. Ibid., p. 687].

10. Там же, С. 184 [Cf. Ibid., pp. 676–677].

11. Ленин, В. И., *Полное собрание сочинений*, Т. 21, С. 419 [Lenin, CW, Volume 18, “How P. B. Axelrod Exposes the Liquidators,” July 1912, pp. 181–182].

12. Гюго, В., *Избранные произведения*, Т. II, М., 1952, С. 105 [Cf. Victor Hugo, *Ninety-Three*, e-art.now, 2019, p. 178].

13. Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 145 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 546–547].

14. Там же, С. 189 [Cf. Ibid., p. 528].

15. Там же, С. 250 [Cf. Ibid., p. 550].

16. Там же, С. 250–251 [Cf. Ibid., p. 659, 660].

17. Там же, С. 201 [Cf. Ibid., p. 624].

18. Там же, С. 222 [Cf. Ibid., pp. 715–716].

19. Синявский, А., Диссидентство как личный опыт, *Юность*, 1989, № 5, С. 89 [A. Sinyavsky, “Dissidence as Personal Experience,” *Yunost (Youth)*, 1989, № 5, p. 89].

20. Ленин, В. И., *Полное собрание сочинений*, Т. 43, С. 372 [Lenin, PSS, Volume 43, p. 372].

21. См. *Тринадцатый съезд РКП(б)*, С. 284, 778, 845 [*Thirteenth Congress of the RKP(b)*, pp. 284, 778, 845].

22. Ленин, В. И., *Полное собрание сочинений*, Т. 43, С. 403 [Lenin, PSS, Volume 43, p. 403].

23. Там же, С. 383 [Lenin, CW, Volume 32, “Plan of the Pamphlet *The Tax in Kind*,” late March–early April 1921, pp. 323–324].

24. Capitalist forces also passed through a similar period of “defending the peasantry” during the “perestroika” period. In the early years, they depicted the “free farmer” as the most attractive social figure called upon to guarantee a favorable break-through in the development of the entire

economy. It took several years of unimpeded propaganda, promoting the course toward capitalist restoration, for a new social figure to be placed on a pedestal — the entrepreneur.

[25.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 234–235 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp. 588–589].

[26.](#) Там же, С. 243 [Ibid., p. 562, 563].

[27.](#) Авторханов, А., *Технология власти*, С. 197 [A. Avtorkhanov, *Technology of Power*, p. 197].

[28.](#) Троцкий, Л. Д., *Сталин*, Т. 2, С. 234 [Cf. Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 588].

[29.](#) Там же, С. 261 [Ibid., p. 593].

[30.](#) Гефтер, М., Предисловие к публикации Записей Е. Варги, *Полис*, 1991, № 2, С. 176 [M. Gefter, “Foreword to the publication of *The Notes of E. Varga*,” *Polis*, 1991, № 2, p. 176].

Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

ASSR [АССР, **автономная советская социалистическая республика**]: a sub-division of the union republics of the Soviet Union, often based on nationality or ethnicity, e.g., Bashkir, Chuvash, or Tatar ASSR.

Black Hundreds [Черносотенцы]: reactionary, ultra-nationalist movement in Russia, often carrying out pogroms (armed mob massacres) directed against Jews and any revolutionaries opposed to the tsarist regime.

Bolsheviks [большевики]: the revolutionary wing of the RSDRP, led by Lenin after the split at the Second Congress in 1903. By 1917, the Bolsheviks led the victorious October Revolution and established the first workers' state.

Changing-Landmarks: group formed among a section of the emigré intelligentsia in the 1920s, this group published the weekly *Smena vekh* [Changing-Landmarks] in Paris from 1921 to 1922. Called for reconciliation with the Soviet regime, while hoping to infuse Bolshevism with a spirit of liberalism. Most of the “smenovekhovtsy” who returned to Russia perished during the Great Terror of 1936–1938.

CC: Central Committee (of the Communist Party).

CCC: Central Control Commission. Highest disciplinary body within the Central Committee.

centner [центнер]: a measure of weight often used in agriculture, equal to one hundred kilograms.

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Cheka [(ЧК) Чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией, спекуляцией и саботажем]: The Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Sabotage; the Soviet secret police from 1917–1922. Replaced by the GPU.

concessions: enterprises (commercial, industrial, mining) that were fully or partially owned by foreign capitalists. They began in the 1920s and were ended in 1930. See below: Glavkontsesskom.

dacha [дача]: a home, usually in the countryside or the outskirts of a city; often similar to a cottage, but sometimes more substantial.

“Declaration of the Eighty-Three”: document submitted to the Politburo, actually by eighty-four members of the Opposition, on 25 May 1927. It addressed: 1) the catastrophe in China where Chiang Kai-shek had slaughtered thousands of workers and Chinese Communist Party members in Shanghai in April 1927; 2) the betrayal of the British General Strike in 1926 by the General Council and the Anglo-Russian Committee; 3) the economic situation in the Soviet Union; 4) the threat of war; and 5) the political crisis within the party. From May 1927 until the Fifteenth Party Congress in December, the document was signed by more than 3,000 party members, most of whom were later expelled, exiled, or otherwise victimized.

desiatina [десятина]: a measure of area used in Russia until 1918, equal to 1.0925 hectares. One hectare contains about 2.47 acres.

economic year [хозяйственный год]: in the 1920s, through 1930, the economic year in the Soviet Union went from 1 October through 30 September. To distinguish it from the calendar year, the economic year was designated in the following way: 1928/1929. In 1931, the economic year was changed to 1 January through 31 December.

ECCI [ИККИ]: Executive Committee of the Communist International.

Five-Year Plan, FYP [пятилетка; пятилетний план]: a central economic plan, developed by Gosplan, covering nearly all aspects of the Soviet economy. The dates of the first Five-Year Plan were 1 October 1928 to 31 December 1932, i.e., a period of four years and three months. “Five in Four” became a major political slogan as Stalin urged accelerated tempos of industrialization.

Glavkontsesskom [Главконцесском]: The Main Concession Committee, 1923–1937, government body charged with developing economic ties with Western countries. Piatakov became first chairman on 8 March 1923. Trotsky became chairman on 26 May 1925. Other members included Ioffe, Krasin, Preobrazhensky, Mdivani, Litvinov, and Stetsky.

Gosizdat [Госиздат]: the main state publishing house in the early Soviet period.

Gosplan [Госплан]: The State Planning Committee, responsible for economic planning in the USSR.

GPU: *see* OGPU.

GULag [Главное управление лагерей]: Main [Prison-] Camp Administration.

ispolkom [исполком]: executive committee.

Istpart [Истпарт]: the official bureau of party history. Toward the end of the 1920s, under Yaroslavsky’s leadership, it became a major falsifier of history.

kolkhoz [колхоз]: collective farm.

Komsomol [Коммунистический союз молодёжи]: the Communist Youth League; youth organization of the Communist Party.

krai [край]: an administrative unit, or territory, containing within it both oblasts and okrugs. Kraikom has been translated as Territorial Committee.

kulak [кулак]: more prosperous peasant, often employing hired agricultural labor and possessing better machinery, mills, storage facilities, larger livestock herds, etc.

Kommunarka [Коммунарка]: a site on the outskirts of Moscow where more than ten thousand people were executed in 1937–1938,

including many high-ranking party members and leaders of the October Revolution.

Molodaia gvardiia [**Молодая гвардия; Young Guard**]: one of the publishing houses and literary groups founded in 1922 by members of the Komsomol [Communist Youth]; unsympathetic to the fellow-travelers in literature.

muzhik [**мужик**]: broadly, a Russian peasant, sometimes with connotations of coarseness and rural backwardness.

Narkomnats [**Народный комиссариат по делам национальностей**]: People's Commissariat of Nationalities; the commissariat in charge of non-Russian nationality policy from 1917–1924, headed by Stalin.

NEP [(НЭП) **Новая экономическая политика**]: New Economic Policy. A set of economic policies begun by the Communist Party in the spring of 1921 to allow a recovery period after the harsh years of war, revolution, and civil war. Limited private enterprise in small industry and retail trade was permitted, leading to the reemergence of small-time capitalists, or Nepmen, who flourished under the watchful eye of the Soviet government. In the countryside, forced requisition of food was replaced by a tax-in-kind. Deepening social stratification alarmed many layers in the party and was the object of sharp inner-party debate.

nomenklatura [**номенклатура**]: the list of people being considered for appointment to high positions in the party or state; also, the collective name for such people.

“non-returner” [**невозвращенец**]: a Soviet citizen living abroad, who, when summoned back to the Soviet Union, refused to return, often to avoid being victimized during the Great Terror of 1936–1938. A defector.

oblast [**область**]: a relatively large administrative unit, nearing the size of a province.

OGPU [(ОГПУ) **Объединённое государственное политическое управление**]: United State Political Administration. The Soviet political police. Until 1922, known as the Cheka; from 1922–34, the

GPU and OGPU; then, from 1934, the NKVD [People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs]. Later, after 1954 and until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, known as the KGB.

okrug [округ]: a large administrative unit, smaller than an oblast.

Orgburo [Оргбюро]: the body subordinate to the Politburo and Central Committee of the Communist Party responsible for organizing the work of party members and for assigning people to various posts. Became a powerful weapon in the hands of Stalin in his fight against the oppositions that arose in the party.

“perestroika” [перестройка]: “restructuring,” the reform period in late Soviet history [1985-1991], largely initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev and leading to the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

piatyorka [пятёрка]: a group of five.

Politburo [Политбюро]: the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The small but powerful party committee making major policy decisions between Party Congresses.

pood [пуд]: a measure of weight in Russia, equalling approximately 16.4 kilograms or 36 pounds.

PUR [Политическое управление Революционного военного совета Республики (ПУР РВСР, 1919–1922)]: the body directing the political work of the Red Army and Navy.

rabfak [рабфак]: a series of preparatory courses for workers planning to attend the university.

rabkor [рабкор]: worker correspondents who often traveled at their own peril to distant villages for investigative reporting.

Rabkrin, RKI [Рабкрин, Рабоче-крестьянская инспекция]: Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. The body set up in 1920 to monitor the activity of state administration, exposing corruption, abuse of power, etc. Headed by Stalin, 1920–1922; Kuibyshev, 1923–1926; Ordzhonikidze, 1926–1930. Sharply criticized by Lenin on 23 January 1923 for ineffectiveness during the time Stalin was its head.

RKP(b) [РКП(б), Российская коммунистическая партия (большевики)]: Russian Communist Party (bolshevik); one of the

names of what would become the Communist Party. Renamed the VKP(b) in 1925.

RSDRP [Российская социал-демократическая рабочая партия (РСДРП)]: The Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, founded in 1898. Both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks emerged from the party in 1903.

RSFSR: The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic; the largest republic of those which became the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). It contained within it sixteen autonomous republics and numerous autonomous or semi-autonomous regions.

RVS, Revvoensovet [(PBC) Революционный Военный Совет]: Revolutionary Military Council. Highest body in the military, directing the political leadership of the armed forces. Headed by Trotsky, 6 September 1918–26 January 1925.

samizdat [самиздат]: "self-publishing," i.e., works that were circulated unofficially in the Soviet Union, often in typewritten copies passed hand to hand.

"Seven" [семёрка]: six members of the Politburo, plus Kuibyshev, would meet without Trotsky to decide major issues without his participation. The "Seven" functioned as an illegal faction within the Central Committee.

SNK [CHK]: See: Sovnarkom.

soviet [совет]: broadly, a council; an elective body of rule, e.g., the Council of Workers' Deputies in the governmental structures of the Soviet Union.

sovkhoz [совхоз]: a Soviet, or state, farm. Large farms formed by the state, employing hired labor paid at fixed wage-rates.

Sovnarkom [Совнарком; Совет Народных Комиссаров]: The Council of People's Commissars, major body of the Soviet government from 1917–1946. Subordinate to the Central Executive Committee.

SRs: members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

stagnation, time of [время застоя]: the twenty or so years from Brezhnev's coming to power in 1964 to the beginning of

“perestroika” (in 1986–87).

troika [тройка]: a group of three. In the early 1920s, also refers specifically to the faction of Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev.

TseKUBU [(ЦЕКУБУ) Центральная комиссия по улучшению быта учёных при СНК РСФСР]: A Soviet commission set up in 1921 during “war communism” to improve the living conditions of scientists, technicians, scholars, and writers. Dissolved in 1937.

TsIK [(ЦИК) Центральный исполнительный комитет]: The Central Executive Committee (highest body of the Soviet government from 1922–1938).

Uchraspred [Учраспред; учётно-распределительное бюро]: the Registration and Distribution Department of the Central Committee in the Soviet Union. It was founded in 1920 as a department in the Russian Communist Party responsible for registering the members and assigning them to different tasks. However, the appointments to the highest party positions still came under the jurisdiction of the Orgburo. In 1922, the Uchraspred made over ten thousand assignments. In 1924, it was merged with the Orgburo, forming the Orgraspred.

VKP(b) [ВКП(б). Всесоюзная коммунистическая партия (большевиков)]: The All-Union Communist Party (bolshevik); renamed the KPSS (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in 1952.

VSNNKh [Высший Совет Народного Хозяйства; Supreme Council of the National Economy]: Central state body directing the economy.

VTsIK [Всероссийский центральный исполнительный комитет; All-Russian Central Executive Committee]. In between sessions of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, the highest legislative and executive body of the Soviet state.

VTsSPS [ВЦСПС; Всесоюзный центральный совет профессиональных союзов]: The All-Union Central Trade Union Council. Headed by Mikhail Tomsky for most of 1918–1930.

Dates of Party Congresses, Conferences, and Comintern Congresses

Party Congresses

Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
[RKP(b)]: 8–16 March 1921

Eleventh Congress of the RKP(b): 27 March–2 April 1922

Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b): 17–25 April 1923

Thirteenth Congress of the RKP(b): 23–31 May 1924

Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
[VKP(b)]: 18–31 December 1925

Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 2–19 December 1927

Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 26 June–13 July 1930

Seventeenth Congress of the VKP(b) [“Congress of Victors”]: 26
January–10 February 1934

Eighteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 10–21 March 1939

Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
[KPSS/CPSU]: 5–14 October 1952

Twentieth Congress of the CPSU: 14–25 February 1956

Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU: 27 January–5 February 1959

Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU: 17–31 October 1961

Party Conferences

Tenth Conference of the RKP(b): 26–28 May 1921

Eleventh Conference of the RKP(b): 19–22 December 1921

Twelfth Conference of the RKP(b): 4–7 August 1922

Thirteenth Conference of the RKP(b): 16–18 January 1924

Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b): 27–29 April 1925

Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b): 26 October–3 November 1926

Sixteenth Conference of the VKP(b): 23–29 April 1929

Seventeenth Conference of the VKP(b): 30 January–4 February 1932

Congresses of the Third International (Comintern)

First Congress: 2–7 March 1919

Second Congress: 21 July–6 August 1920

Third Congress: 22 June–12 July 1921

Fourth Congress: 4 November–5 December 1922

Fifth Congress: 17 June–8 July 1924

Sixth Congress: 17 July–1 September 1928

Seventh Congress: 25 July–20 August 1935

Selected Biographical Notes¹

ANTONOV-OVSEENKO, Vladimir Aleksandrovich (9 [21] March 1883–10 February 1938). Born in officer's family. In RSDRP, 1902–1917. Many arrests. In emigration, 1910–1917. Writer for *Golos*, *Nashe slovo*, *Nachalo* in Paris, 1914–1917. Returned to Petrograd in June 1917. Important role in military, 1917–1920. Head of Political Directorate of Red Army, 5 August 1922–12 January 1924. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” In Left Opposition from 1923. Diplomat in Czechoslovakia, 1924–1928. Broke with Opposition in December 1927. Diplomat in Latvia, 1928–1930; Poland, 1930–1934. General Consul in Spain, 1 October 1936–15 September 1937. People's Commissar of Justice, RSFSR, 1937. Arrested 12 October 1937. Sentenced to death on 8 February 1938 and shot on 10 February. Rehabilitated in 1956.

BAKAEV, Ivan Petrovich (1887–25 August 1936). Born in poor peasant family. Joined RSDRP in 1906. Underground work in Baku, Astrakhan, Petersburg. Several arrests and exile. More than six years in prison. Secretary of Petrograd Soviet in 1917. 1918–1919, in Red Army. Chair of the Petrograd Cheka in 1919–1920. In Leningrad Control Commission, 1925–1926. Delegate of Twelfth to Fifteenth Party Congresses. Elected to Central Control Commission at Fourteenth Congress. In 1925, member of “New Opposition.” In 1926, member of “United Opposition.” Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Removed from CCC on 14 November 1927; expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Broke with

Opposition in 1928, readmitted to party. Arrested 9 December 1934. Sentenced to eight years in prison on 16 January 1935. Defendant at First Moscow Trial in August 1936. Shot on 25 August 1936. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988. Wife, Anna Petrovna Kostina, Zinoviev's secretary, shot in 1937.

BOGUSLAVSKY, Mikhail Solomonovich (1 [13] May 1886–1 February 1937). Born in tailor's family. Member of Jewish Socialist Party, 1904–1908. Participated in 1905 Revolution. In Jewish Socialist Workers' Party, 1905–1917. Joined Bolsheviks in October 1917. Leading party work in Voronezh, then Ukraine, 1919–1920. Democratic Centralist, 1920–1921. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six" in October 1923. In Left Opposition, 1923–1929. Chairman of Maly Sovnarkom of RSFSR, 1924–1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Signed letter departing from Opposition on 27 October 1929. Reinstated in party, May 1930. Economic work in Siberia, 1930–1936. Arrested on 8 August 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January 1937 and shot on 1 February. Rehabilitated in 1987.

BUBNOV, Andrei Sergeevich (22 March [4 April] 1884–1 August 1938). Born in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. Member of RSDRP from 1903. Studied at Moscow Agricultural Institute, expelled. Repeatedly arrested. Helped organize seventy-two-day strike in Ivanovo-Voznesensk in 1905. At Sixth Prague Conference in 1912. In 1912–1917, candidate-member of CC, in 1917–1918, member of CC. In Ukraine, 1918–1919. Member of "left communists" and "military opposition" in 1918–1919. Belonged to "Democratic Centralists" in 1921–1922. Member of RVS [Revolutionary Military Council] of the Fourteenth Army on the Southern Front. 1922–1924, candidate-member CC, heading the Agitation-Propaganda Department of the CC. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six," but soon supported CC majority. In 1924–1929, head of PUR of the Red Army. Editor of *Krasnaya zvezda* [Red Star]. 1924–1937, member of the CC. 1924–1934, member of Orgburo. 1925–1930, Secretariat of CC. 1929–1937, People's Commissar of Enlightenment of the RSFSR. Arrested

on 17 October 1937. Sentenced to death on 1 August 1938; shot and buried at “Kommunarka.” Rehabilitated on 14 March 1956 and reinstated in party on 22 March.

BUKHARIN, Nikolai Ivanovich (9 October 1888–15 March 1938). Member of party from 1906. Studied at Moscow University 1907–1911. In emigration 1911–1917. Candidate-member of Politburo 1919–1924; member of Politburo 2 June 1924–17 November 1929. Member of CC 1917–1934. Editor of *Pravda*, 1918–1929; Executive Committee of Comintern 1919–1929; 1924–1929 editor of journal *Bolshevik*; 1934–1936 editor of *Izvestiia*. Allied with Stalin against Left Opposition, 1924–1927. Led Right Opposition against Stalin 1928–1929. Arrested in February 1937 and shot in March 1938. Rehabilitated legally on 3 February 1988, and along party lines on 21 June 1988.

CHAYANOV, Aleksandr Vasilievich (17 [29] January 1888–3 October 1937). Economist, sociologist, writer, utopian. Born in merchant’s family. In 1906, entered Moscow Agricultural Institute. In 1912, research in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy. Leading activist in cooperative movement after February Revolution. From 1918, professor at Petrovsky Agricultural Academy. 1921–1923, member of Narkomzem and its representative in Gosplan. In 1929, accused of being agent of imperialism, supporter of Right Deviation. Arrested in July 1930, as part of fabricated Working-Peasants’ Party. Sentenced to five years in prison on 16 January 1932. After four years in prison, exiled to Alma-Ata. Arrested in March 1937 and shot on 3 October 1937. Rehabilitated in 1987.

GOLTSMAN, Eduard Solomonovich (1882–25 August 1936). In revolutionary movement from 1900; member of RSDRP from 1903, Bolshevik. In Red Army 1919–1920. Worked abroad for People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs [NKID], 1923–1926, in Japan, Syria, Egypt, Palestine. In Left Opposition, 1926–1928; signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Expelled from party, 16 May 1936. Arrested by NKVD in May 1936. Defendant at first

Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot 25 August. Rehabilitated in 1988.

GORKY, Maksim [Aleksii Maksimovich Peshkov] (16 [28] March 1868–18 June 1936). Major writer, playwright, journalist, political activist. Born in Nizhnii Novgorod. Emerged as popular writer of romantic tales in 1890s. Collaborated with RSDRP, Lenin, Bogdanov. Considerable financial support to revolutionists. Arrested many times. Lived on Capri from 1906 to 1913. Worked closely with Lunacharsky, Bazarov, and Bogdanov. Advocate of “God-Building.” In 1917, his newspaper *New Life* was critical of Bolsheviks. In 1921, returned to Italy. Opposed death penalty in trial of twelve SRs. Lived in Sorrento from 1922 to 1932. Returned briefly to Soviet Union in 1928, 1929, 1931, and for good in 1932. Founded famous series “Life of Remarkable People.” Organizer of Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Declared by official Soviet literary historians to be the father of “socialist realism.” Closely followed by NKVD. Died of ill health, but at Third Moscow Trial in 1938, three physicians were falsely accused of poisoning him.

IOFFE, Adolf Abramovich (10 October 1883–17 November 1927). Son of Simferopol merchant. 1903–1904, studied medicine at Berlin University. From 1903, Menshevik. Revolutionary work in Baku and Moscow. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Moscow. 1906, exiled to Siberia. Escaped and emigrated to Switzerland. 1906–1907 studied law in Zurich. From 1908, worked with Trotsky in Vienna to publish *Pravda*. Helped organize August bloc in Vienna in 1912. Finished medical school in Vienna, studied psychiatry and met with Alfred Adler. In 1912, arrested in Odessa and exiled to Tobolsk. Arrested in 1913. Sentenced to eternal exile in Siberia. Arrived in Petrograd in April 1917; joined Mezhrainitsy. Published *Vpered* with Trotsky. At Sixth Congress of RSDRP, joined Bolsheviks. Member of Military Revolutionary Committee. Major diplomatic work from 1917: Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations; ambassador to Germany; diplomatic missions to Japan, China, Austria. Fell seriously ill (polyneuritis) in Japan in 1923. From 1923, one of main leaders of Left Opposition.

Deputy chair under Trotsky at Main Concessions Committee, 1925–1927. Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Denied medical treatment abroad by CC. Committed suicide and left letter to Trotsky in November 1927. Daughter Nadezhda (1906–1999) spent many years in camps and exile. Second wife Maria Mikhailovna Girshberg spent twenty years in camps. Son, Vladimir (1919–1937) shot in Tomsk.

KAMENEV, Lev Borisovich [Rozenfeld] (6 [18] July 1883–25 August 1936). Born in Moscow in family of railway worker, then engineer. In RSDRP from 1901. Joined *Iskra* group in Paris in 1902; moved to Switzerland. Returned to Russia in 1903. Arrested many times. Member of Petersburg Committee, 1905–1907. Member of Foreign Bolshevik Center, 1908–1914. Arrested in 1914 and sent into exile in Siberia in 1915. Returned to Petrograd in 1917. Editor of *Pravda*, April–October 1917. On 10 October 1917, opposed armed uprising. Participant in peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, November–December 1917. Imprisoned in Finland, January–August 1918. Many leading posts in Soviet period. Chairman of Mossovet, 1918–1926; from 1922, deputy chairman of SNK and STO. Member of CC, 1917–1927; member of Politburo, 1919–1926. With Zinoviev and Stalin against Trotsky 1922–1924. Joined United Opposition in April 1926. In October 1926, removed from Politburo, and in October 1927, from CC. In December 1927 expelled from party. Diplomat in Italy, November 1926–January 1928. In June 1928, reinstated in party. In October 1932, expelled for reading “Riutin Platform.” Exiled to Minusinsk. In December 1933, reinstated in party; worked at Academia Publishing house. Arrested in January 1935, sentenced to five years in prison. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936, and shot next day. Rehabilitated in 1988. His first wife, Olga Davidovna Kameneva (Trotsky’s younger sister), was shot on 11 September 1941 near Orel; their two sons were also shot: Aleksandr Lvovich (1906–15 July 1939) and Yurii Lvovich (1921–30 January 1938).

KAVTARADZE, Sergei Ivanovich (15 August 1885–17 October 1971). Joined RSDRP in 1903. Underground work in Tiflis, Batum, Kutais, Baku; many arrests and exile. Met Stalin in this period. From 1912 to 1914, worked on *Pravda*. In 1915, finished St. Petersburg University. From November 1917 through 1919, member of Caucasian Territorial Committee. 1922–1923, chair of the Sovnarkom of Georgia. Opposed Stalin's autonomization plan. Joined Left Opposition in 1923. Signed "Declaration of the Eighty-Three." In December 1927, expelled from party and exiled to Orenburg Province. Arrested on 24 December 1928 and sent to exile in Central Asia. Transferred on 25 January 1929 to Tobolsk political isolator. Left the Opposition in 1931. From 1931 to 1936, editor of literature in Moscow. Arrested on 7 October 1936. On 13 December 1939, freed from prison on Stalin's orders; restored to party in 1940. From 1941, served in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participated in Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. 1945–1952, ambassador to Romania. Retired in 1954. Delegate to Twenty-Second Party Congress. Died on 17 October 1971 in Tbilisi.

KHODOROVSKY, Iosif Isaevich (1885–7 May 1938). Born in Nikolaev. Joined RSDRP in 1903. Worked in Nikolaev, Moscow, and other cities. In 1905, member of the Nikolaev Committee of the RSDRP. Imprisoned in Kherson. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow in 1917. In Red Army during Civil War. 1922–1928, in Narkompros of the RSFSR. 1928–1932, trade representative in Italy, then Turkey. Arrested on 2 December 1937. Sentenced to death on 3 May 1938 and shot on 7 May. Buried at "Kommunarka." Rehabilitated on 11 April 1956.

KISILYOV, Aleksei Semyonovich (1879–30 October 1937). Born in worker's family near Ivanovo. Joined RSDRP in 1898. Repeatedly arrested for revolutionary activity in Kharkov, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Moscow, Odessa, and Baku. Elected to CC in 1914, sent to Vienna to meet Lenin. Arrested on return in 1914 but escaped. Fought in Civil War. On Presidium of VTsIK. Elected head of miners' union in 1920. Member of Workers' Opposition. 1921–1923, chair of Maly

Sovnarkom. Narkom of Rabkrin of the RSFSR. 1924–1937 secretary of VTsIK. Elected candidate-member of CC 1917–1919, 1921–1923, 1925–1934. Member of Central Control Commission 1923–1925. Arrested on 7 September 1937 and shot on 30 October. Rehabilitated on 4 April 1956.

KOLLONTAI, Aleksandra Mikhailovna (19 [31] March 1872–9 March 1952). Born into wealthy Petersburg family. Came into contact with socialist movement through Elena Stasova. Studied in Zurich in 1898. Met the Webbs in England. Met Plekhanov in Geneva in 1901. Was in Petersburg in 1905. Emigrated in 1908. Collaborated with the group Vperyod. Participated in congresses of RSDRP in 1907, 1910, and 1912. Joined Bolsheviks in 1915. Member of Petrograd Soviet in 1917. Supported Lenin's "April Theses." Arrested by Provisional Government but freed on bail paid by Gorky and Krasin. In March 1918, supported "Left Communists" opposed to Brest-Litovsk Treaty. In Ukraine during Civil War. From 1920, head of womens' department in CC. Member of Workers' Opposition in 1921. From 1922, largely diplomatic work in Norway, Mexico, Sweden. Ambassador to Sweden from 1930 to 1945. Returned to Moscow in March 1945. In poor health, but wrote a major memoir about Lenin. Died of heart attack in 1952. Wrote several novels, often devoted to role of women in socialist society. Best known for *Love of Worker Bees* (1924) and *Vasilisa Malygina* (1927).

KONDRATIEV, Nikolai Dmitrievich (4 [16] March 1892–17 September 1938). Born in peasant family. From 1905, studied at seminary. Became SR in 1905, expelled from seminary in December 1906. Moved to Petersburg in 1908. Finished law studies at Petersburg University in 1911. In 1913, arrested and briefly imprisoned. After February Revolution, secretary under Kerensky for agricultural affairs. Delegate at Third Congress of SRs in May-June 1917. After October 1917, remains an SR. In 1919, leaves party and devotes himself to scientific research. Teaches in Moscow from 1918. In People's Commissariat of Finance, 1920–1928. In 1920–1923, in Narkomzem. Worked in agricultural sector of Gosplan. In 1922,

avoided deportation through intervention by V. Osinsky. In 1924, travels to USA, England, Canada, and Germany. Publishes works on economic cycles. Attacked by Zinoviev and Stalin for supporting kulaks. Arrested in 1930 in the case of the Working Peasants' Party. On 26 January 1932, sentenced to eight years in prison. Served sentence in Suzdal political isolator. Sentenced to death on 17 September 1938 and shot on same day at "Kommunarka." Rehabilitated secretly in 1963 and publicly in 1987.

KOSIOR, Vladislav [Vladimir] Vikentievich (8 August 1891–30 March 1938). Born in Vengruv (now Poland). Participated in 1905 Revolution. Joined RSDRP in 1906. Revolutionary work in Donbass, Kharkov, Kiev, Petrograd, and Moscow. Five years in prison and more than two years in exile. After February Revolution, on Petrograd Committee. During Civil War, in Red Army. In metal workers' union 1919–1922. 1922–1924, editor of newspaper *Trud* [Labor]. In 1921, joined "Democratic Centralists." Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six"; in Left Opposition from 1923. Removed from *Trud* for opposition activity. 1925–1926, representative of Vneshtorgbank in Paris. In May 1928, expelled from party and exiled to Pokrovsk. Sentenced to five years in political isolator and exile in Siberia. On 10 July 1936, sentenced to five years in corrective labor camp. Participated in hunger strike of Oppositionists at camp in Vorkuta. Arrested on 10 December 1937 and sentenced to death on 11 January 1938. Shot with other Oppositionists on 30 March 1938 in Vorkuta.

KRESTINSKY, Nikolai Nikolaevich (13 [25] October 1883–15 March 1938). Born in family of teacher in Mogilev. Member of party from 1903. Finished law program at Petersburg University in 1907. Revolutionary work in Vilno, Kovno, Vitebsk, Petersburg. Arrested and exiled many times. In 1917–1918, People's Commissariat of Finances, RSFSR; in 1918, deputy chairman of People's Bank, commissar of justice in Petrograd. Member of Politburo, 1919–1921; member of Orgburo, 1919–1921; member of Secretariat of CC, 1919–1921. For many years, member of TsIK. In 1921–1930

ambassador to Germany. In Left Opposition 1923–1927. Broke with the Opposition in 1927, but conducted correspondence with Trotsky and Rakovsky. 1930–1937, deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Arrested on 20 May 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial; sentenced to death on 13 March 1938 and shot on 15 March. Rehabilitated in 1963.

KRUPSKAYA [Ulyanova], Nadezhda Konstantinovna (26 February 1869–27 February 1939). Born in Petersburg in officer's family. Finished Higher Women's Courses in 1895. In party from 1898. Lenin's wife. 1907–1917 in emigration. Leading positions in People's Commissariat of Education, 1918–1939. Member of CC, 1927–1939. Member of CCC 1924–1927, Presidium of CCC, 1924–1926. In "New Opposition," 1925–1926. Editor of journal, *Kommunistka*, 1920–1930. Member of TsIK. Buried on Red Square in Moscow.

KUTUZOV, Ivan Ivanovich (16 [28] May 1885–16 August 1937). Born in Smolensk Province in peasant family. Member of RSDRP from 1906. Repeated arrests. Bolshevik from 1917. Chair of Textile Union in 1917. 1918–1926, chair of CC of Textile Union. Member of Presidium of VTsSPS. Member of the Workers' Opposition. Elected to CC at Tenth Party Congress. In 1921–1922, member of CC and candidate member of Orgburo. In 1927–1937, in Presidium of TsIK. Arrested on 24 June 1937 and shot on 16 August 1937. Rehabilitated on 31 December 1955.

LASHEVICH, Mikhail Mikhailovich [Gaskovich] (1884–30 August 1928). Born in merchant's family. Member of illegal student circles. Finished Odessa Technical School. Initially in a Zionist organization, but joined RSDRP in 1901 and Bolsheviks in 1903. Political work in Odessa, Nikolaev, Yekaterinoslav, Petersburg. Many arrests and exile. Five years in prison. In 1915, mobilized in army. Conducted propaganda among soldiers. In 1917, arrived in Moscow, then Petrograd. Member of Petrograd Soviet. Delegate to First Congress of Soviets in June 1917, elected member of VTsIK. Active participant in October Revolution. Helped organize armed uprising. Member of CC, 1918–1919. Member of RVS on several fronts. In

1922–1925 chair of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee. In 1925, first deputy of Narkomvoenmor, Delegate to Third and Fifth Congresses of Comintern. From April 1923 through 1925, member of CC. Supporter of Zinoviev, member of “New (Leningrad) Opposition,” and from 1926, in “United Opposition.” In 1926, removed as candidate-member of CC and deputy chair of Revolutionary Military Council. On 18 December 1927, expelled from party, In 1928, reinstated. Died in Kharbin on 30 August 1928, either in automobile accident or by suicide.

MARETSKY, Dmitry Petrovich (1901–26 May 1937). Born in Moscow. Member of party 1919–1932. Studied at IKP for three years. Member of editorial board of *Pravda*, 1924–1929. Taught at IKP, 1924–1928. Member of Right Opposition, 1928–1929. At Academy of Sciences in Leningrad, 1929–1931. Expelled from party on 2 April 1931 for “right deviation.” Reinstated in party 8 May 1931. On 9 October 1932, expelled from party; arrested by OGPU on 27 September 1932 for distributing documents of Riutin group. Sentenced on 11 October 1932 to two years of exile. Arrested in April 1933. On 16 April 1933 sentenced to five years in corrective labor camp. At Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Arrested on 5 November 1936; sentenced to death on 26 May 1936 and shot same day along with his brother, G. P. Maretsky, a teacher at Moscow Polygraphical Institute. Rehabilitated in 1959, and along party lines in 1989.

MDIVANI, Polikarp Gurgenovitch [Budu] (1877–10 July 1937). Studied at Moscow University, expelled for student unrest in 1899. Member of RSDRP from 1903. Revolutionary work in the Caucasus. Underground work Tiflis, Batum, Baku, Kutais, 1907–1909. Participated in revolution and civil war in Transcaucasus. 1918–1920, leading positions in Tenth and Eleventh Armies. 1920–1921, chair of the Communist Party of Georgia. From 1922, one of leaders of Georgian opposition. In 1923, joined Left Opposition. 1923–1924, member of Main Concessions Committee of the USSR. 1924, trade representative in France. In 1928, recalled from France,

expelled for belonging to the Left Opposition, exiled for three years to Siberia. 1931, left the Opposition, reinstated in party. Headed Council of National Economy in Georgia. In 1936, arrested and expelled from party. Sentenced to death on 9 July 1937 in case of seven Georgian oppositionists. Shot on 10 July. Rehabilitated on 29 September 1956. Wife, Tsutsunia, arrested and shot in 1937. Four sons shot in 1937. Daughter arrested in 1937 and shot in a prison camp.

MIKOYAN, Anastas Ivanovich (1895–21 October 1978). Born into poor peasant family in the village of Sanain in Tiflis Province. Member of RSDRP from 1915. Finished Armenian Seminary in Tiflis in 1916. In March 1918, helped suppress Musavatist uprising. From March 1919 chair of the Baku Buro of the Caucasian Territorial Committee. In 1919, RVS in Eleventh Army, also member of VTsIK. Member of the CC from 1923–1976; member of the Politburo from 1935 to 1966. Many government and party posts in long career. Heavily involved in repressions of 1937, especially in Armenia. Survived purges, outlived Stalin; helped rehabilitate some during post-Stalin years. Oversaw suppression of workers in Novocherkassk in 1962. From 1965 to 1974, member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. On pension from 1974.

MRACHKOVSKY, Sergei Vitalievich (15 [27] June 1888–25 August 1936). Born in family of political exile, railway worker. In party from 1905. Repeatedly arrested. In 1917, member of Ekaterinburg Soviet. In Red Army during Civil War, prominently in Siberia. From 1925, economic work. In Left Opposition from 1923; leader of Opposition in Urals. Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Expelled from party in October 1927. On 13 January 1928, sentenced to three years exile. In 1930, broke from Opposition and reinstated in party. May 1932–August 1933, in charge of building Baikal-Amur Mainline. In 1932, in I. N. Smirnov’s underground group. Arrested in 1933; sent to Akmolinsk. Arrested on 25 January 1935 and sentenced to five years in prison. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and

shot next day. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988. His brother, Leonid Vitalievich, also in Left Opposition, shot on 25 March 1937; his sons, Viacheslav and Leonid, shot on 1 April 1937.

MURALOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (1877–1 February 1937). Born in peasant family. In RSDRP from 1903. Participant in armed uprising in Moscow, December 1905. In army, 1915–November 1917. Leading positions in Red Army, 1918–1927. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” Leading member of Left Opposition. From 1925, in CCC. Rector of Agricultural Academy, 1925–1927. Expelled from party in December 1927. Exiled in February 1928. Arrested on 17 April 1936. Tortured for several months. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January and shot on 1 February 1937. Rehabilitated in April 1986.

NEVSKY, Vladimir Ivanovich [Krivobokov] (2 [14] May 1876–26 May 1937). Born in Rostov-on-the-Don into family of wealthy merchant. In 1894, student circles close to Populism. In 1897, entered Moscow University. Member of RSDRP from 1898. Sent from Rostov to Petersburg in 1900, where he met the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Spent nine months in prison, then exiled to Voronezh. In 1904, went to Geneva and met Lenin. Returned to Russia for political work in Voronezh, Yaroslavl, Moscow, and Petersburg. In 1913, member of CC. In March 1917 in Petrograd. Organizer and editor of several Bolshevik newspapers. Helped organize seizure of railroads with Bubnov in Petrograd. During Civil War, Deputy People’s Commissar for Transport. Member of Revolutionary Military Council. In 1919–1920, in VTsIK; briefly in “Workers’ Opposition.” From May 1919 to August 1921, rector of Sverdlov Communist University. From 1921, worked in Petrograd Bureau of Istpart. From 1920 through February 1935, member of Commission on the History of the October Revolution and RKP(b). Author of over five hundred works on party history. In 1925, headed Tretiakov Gallery and then appointed director of Lenin Library. Arrested on 20 February 1935 and sentenced to five years in prison in Suzdal on 5 May. In 1937, transferred to Butyrki

Prison in Moscow. On 25 May 1937 sentenced to death and shot the next day. Many of his students were repressed. Rehabilitated in 1955.

ORDZHONIKIDZE, Grigory Konstantinovich [Sergo] (12 [24] October 1886–18 February 1937). Born in Georgia in poor aristocratic family. Member of RSDRP from 1903. Active in 1905 Revolution in Caucasus. Arrested and exiled several times. Elected to CC at Prague Conference in January 1912. Returned to Petrograd in June 1917. Participated in October Revolution. In Red Army during Civil War. Member of CC, 1912–1917, 1921–1927 and 1934–1937. In 1926–1930, chairman of CCC, People's Commissar of RKI [Workers' and Peasants' Inspection] and deputy chairman of Sovnarkom. From 1930, chairman of VSNKh; 1932–1937, People's Commissar of Heavy Industry. From 1930–1937, member of Politburo. One of Stalin's closest supporters. Reported to have opposed persecution of Old Bolsheviks. Committed suicide on 18 February 1937, on eve of February-March Plenum of CC.

OSINSKY, N. [Valerian Valerianovich Obolensky] (6 April [25 March] 1887–1 September 1938, Moscow). Born into family of veterinarian. From 1905, student at Law Faculty of Moscow University. In 1906, studied political economy in Munich and Berlin. In 1907, joined Bolsheviks with V. M. Smirnov. Party work in Moscow, Tver, Kharkov. Finished Moscow University in 1911. Arrested three times before 1917. Exiled to Tver in 1913. Helped found Bolshevik newspaper *Nash put* [Our Way]. In December 1917 became first chair of Supreme Council of the Economy [VSNKh]. One of leaders of "Left Communists." Opposed Brest Treaty. In 1920–1921, one of leaders of the group of "Democratic Centralists." In 1923, signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six," then broke with the Opposition. Candidate-member of the CC 1921–1922 and 1925–1937. From July 1925, in Presidium of Gosplan. Many economic posts over next years. From 1932, member of Academy of Sciences. In 1937, organized All-Union Census. Arrested on 14 October 1937, along with son Vadim. In March 1938, witness at trial of Bukharin-Rykov.

On 1 September 1938 sentenced to death and shot the same day. Rehabilitated in 1957. Son, Vadim (b. 1912), shot on 10 December 1937.

PIATAKOV, Georgii [Yurii] Leonidovich (6 [18] August 1890–1 February 1937). Born in family of factory director. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Kiev. Close to anarchists. Studied economics at Petersburg University. Entered RSDRP in 1910. Arrested several times. Exile in Irkutsk Province. Emigrated to Switzerland in 1915. Worked with Lenin on journal *Kommunist*. Moved to Sweden, then Norway. From April 1917, Kiev Committee of RSDRP. A Left Communist during Brest debates. Leading party work in Ukraine, 1918–1919. In Revvoensovet during Civil War. From 1920, economic work. 1921–1923, candidate-member of CC. From March 1922, deputy chairman of Gosplan. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” From 1923, active member of Left Opposition. 1923–1927, member of CC, deputy chairman of VSNKh. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Broke with Opposition on 28 February 1928. Reinstated in party in 1928. Worked at Gosbank and VSNKh. Deputy People’s Commissar for Heavy Industry, 1931–1936. Arrested on 13 September 1936. Severely beaten during interrogations. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January 1937 and shot 1 February. Rehabilitated in 1988. Second wife, Liudmila Fyodorovna Ditiatova, shot on 20 June 1937 and rehabilitated on 11 June 1991.

PILNYAK, Boris Andreevich [Vogau] (29 September [11 October] 1894–21 April 1938). Soviet writer. Born in Mozhaishk; father a veterinarian. In 1920, finished Moscow Institute of National Economy. Lived in Moscow from 1924. Author of many short stories and several novels, including *Naked Year* (1922). Collaborated in Krug publishing house, headed by Voronsky. Attacked as fellow-traveler by Proletcultists. Subject of major critical articles by Voronsky and Trotsky. Fell into disfavor after publishing *Tale of the Unextinguished Moon* in 1926. Heavily criticized by RAPP in 1929–1930. Arrested on 28 October 1937 and charged with

spying for Japan (where he had traveled). Sentenced to death on 21 April 1938 and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1956.

POSTYSHEV, Pavel Petrovich (6 [18] September 1887–26 February 1939). Born in worker's family in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. In RSDRP from 1904. Wounded in Ivanovo-Voznesensk during strike in June 1905. Arrested and exiled many times. From March 1917, deputy chairman of Irkutsk Soviet. In 1919, participant in partisan movement. From 1923, party work in Ukraine. 1930–1933, secretary of CC. Carried out extreme measures during famine in Ukraine. Candidate-member of Politburo from 1934. Arrested along with wife on 22 February 1938. Both shot on 26 February 1939 in Butyrki prison. Rehabilitated in 1956.

PREOBRAZHENSKY, Yevgeny Alekseevich (15 [27] February 1886–13 July 1937). Born in priest's family. In party from October 1903. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Orel, then in Moscow in November–December, including armed uprising. On 18 March 1906, arrested in Perm. Released in August. 1908–1917, party work in Siberia; arrests and exile. In Urals, 1918–1920; on editorial board of *Pravda*. With “left communists” in 1918. From 5 April 1920–16 March 1921, secretary of CC. Economic work, 1921–1924. 1924–1927, deputy chairman of Glavkontsesskom; 1926–1928, editorial board of *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” From 1923, one of leading members of Left Opposition. Expelled from party in 1927, and exiled to Kazakhstan in January 1928. In July 1929, joined Radek and Smilga in breaking with Opposition. Reinstated in party in January 1930. In 1931–1932, rejoined I. N. Smirnov in opposition work. People's Commissariat of Light Industry, 1932–1933. In January 1933, expelled from party and arrested. On 16 January 1933, sentenced to three years of exile in Kazakhstan. In December 1933, reinstated in party. 1933–1936, economic work. Arrested in December 1936. Sentenced to death on 13 July 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1988 and 1990. Author of many theoretical works, including *The ABCs of Communism* (with Bukharin, 1919), and *The New Economics* (1926).

RADEK, Karl Berngardovich [Sobelson] (1885–19 May 1939). Born in Lvov in family of teacher. Finished Krakow University. Participated in Social Democratic movement in Galicia, Poland, and Germany; from 1917 in Russia. Participated in Zimmerwald Conference. Member of party, 1917–1927 and 1929–1936. Member of CC, 1919–1924. In 1918–1920, illegal work in Germany. Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern [ECCI], 1920–1923. Head of the Eastern Department of the ECCI, 1923–1924; rector of the University of Toilers of the East, 1925–1927. In Left Opposition, 1924–1929. Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested by OGPU in January 1928. 1928–1929 in exile. Reinstated in party, 1930. In 1929–1930, on editorial board of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. 1930–1932, deputy editor of the journal *Za rubezhom* [Abroad]. 1932–1936, headed international information bureau in the CC. Expelled from party on 7 October 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial; sentenced on 30 January 1937 to ten years in corrective labor camp. Murdered by NKVD in Verkhneuralsk political isolator on 19 May 1939. Rehabilitated in 1988.

RAFAIL [Farbman], Rafail Borisovich (1893–1966). Born in family of cab driver. In party from 1910. Arrested in 1914 and exiled. In Red Army, 1918. Party work in Ukraine 1919–1922. Member of Democratic Centralists, 1920–1921. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” In Left Opposition, 1925–1928. Expelled from party 18 December 1927. Exiled to Siberia, 1928–1930. Broke with Opposition 28 May 1930. Worked in Moscow 1931–1932 in metal industry. Reinstated in party 1932. Member of underground Trotskyist group led by I. N. Smirnov, 1932–13 January 1933. Arrested and expelled from party. Sentenced on 16 April 1933 to three years in corrective labor camp [ITL]. In Verkhneuralsk political isolator, 1933–1934. Sentenced to five years in ITL. Arrested in 1935; spent 1935–1956 in ITL. Freed in 1956. Lived as pensioner in Moscow. Died in 1966. Rehabilitated in 1989.

RAKOVSKY, Khristian Georgievich (1 August 1873–11 September 1941). Born in family of Bulgarian merchant. In Social Democracy from 1890. Participated in revolutionary movement in Balkans, France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine. Emigrated to Geneva in 1890; began medical studies. In 1896, finished medical school in Montpellier, France. From 1903–1917, tried to reconcile Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Member of International Socialist Bureau, 1907–1914. One of organizers of Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915. Supported newspaper *Nashe Slovo*, edited by Martov and Trotsky in Paris, 1914–1916. In Stockholm during October Revolution. Joined RSDRP(b) in November 1917; party work in Odessa and Petrograd. 1919–July 1923, chairman of SNK and People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine. From 1919 through 1927, member of CC. Participated in Genoa Conference in 1922. Ambassador in England, 1923–1925. October 1925–October 1927, trade representative in France. From 1923, leading member of Left Opposition. In 1927, removed from all posts, expelled from CC on 14 November and from party also in November. In January 1928, sentenced to four years in exile in Kustanai; in 1931, sentenced to four more years of exile in Barnaul. In 1935, broke from Opposition with Sosnovsky. Returned to Moscow and reinstated in party in November 1935. Expelled from party in 1936. Arrested on 27 January 1937, after lengthy letter from Yezhov to Stalin seeking his arrest. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced on 13 March 1938 to twenty years in prison. Shot near Orel on 11 September 1941 with 160 other prisoners. Rehabilitated in 1988.

RASKOLNIKOV, Fyodor Fyodorovich [Ilyin] (28 January [9 February] 1892–12 September 1939). Born to archdeacon. Entered Petersburg Polytechnical Institute in 1909. Joined Bolsheviks in 1910. 1912–1914, wrote for newspapers *Zvezda* and *Pravda*. Lieutenant in fleet in 1917. Deputy chairman of Kronstadt Soviet after February Revolution. Freed from Kresty Prison in October 1917. Fought in Petrograd and Moscow. In spring 1918, deputy People's Commissar for Naval Affairs. Captured by British in December 1918. Exchanged

for British prisoners on 27 May 1919. After Civil War, diplomat in Afghanistan, 1921–1923. Supported Left Opposition, 1923–1924. Eastern Department of Comintern, 1924–1927. In 1930–1933 in Estonia, then Denmark; 1934–April 1938 in Bulgaria. In April 1938, became “non-returnee,” moved to Paris with wife and son. Sentenced to death in absentia on 17 July 1939. Wrote famous letter denouncing Stalin on 17 August 1939. Went into shock on 24 August 1939, upon learning of Stalin-Hitler Pact. Died in psychiatric clinic in Nice on 12 September 1939. Rehabilitated in 1963; letter to Stalin published in late 1980s in Soviet Union. First wife was Larisa Reisner (1895–1926).

RIAZANOV [Goldendakh], David Borisovich (1870–1938). Born in Odessa. In the revolutionary movement from 1887. Spent many years in prison and abroad. Wrote for *Pravda* in Vienna with Trotsky before the war, then for *Nashe slovo* in Paris. Returned to Russia in 1917 and joined the Mezhraiontsy. Founder in 1921 and first director of the Institute of Marx and Engels. Full member of the Institute of Philosophy. Close friends with Debordin. In February 1931 arrested “for having links to Mensheviks” and sentenced to exile in Saratov for three years. Worked at Saratov State University. On 23 July 1937 arrested again. On 21 January 1938 sentenced by a traveling session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, and shot the same day. Rehabilitated on 22 March 1958 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. In September 1989 rehabilitated along party lines.

RUDZUTAK, Yan Ernestovich (3 [15] August 1887–29 July 1938). Born in Latvian peasant family. In RSDRP from 1905. In 1909, sentenced to ten years of hard labor. Freed from Butyrki Prison by February Revolution. Member of CC, 1920–1937; member of Politburo, 1926–1932; candidate-member, 1923–1926, 1934–1937; member of Orgburo, 1921–1924. Deputy secretary of SNK and STO, 1926–1937. Arrested on 25 May 1937 and falsely accused of heading secret Latvian nationalist group. Shot on 29 July 1938. Rehabilitated in 1955.

RYKOV, Aleksei Ivanovich (13 [25] 1881–15 March 1938). Born in Saratov, son of petty merchant. In party from 1898. Party work in Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow, Petersburg, Odessa. Participated in 1905 Revolution. Repeatedly arrested and exiled. Spent several months in Europe in 1909. Member of Moscow Soviet in 1917. 1918–1921, chairman of Supreme Economic Council of RSFSR. 1919–1920, in Council of Labor and Defense. 1924–1930, chairman of the Council of National Economy. Active opponent of Left Opposition, 1923–1927. Along with Voroshilov, voted for Trotsky's arrest. One of leaders of Right Opposition, 1928–1929. Member of CC, 1905–1907, 1917–1918, 1920–1934 (candidate-member 1907–1912, 1934–1937). Member of Politburo, 1922–1930. Member of Orgburo, 1920–1924. Arrested on 27 February 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 13 March 1938 and shot on 15 March. Rehabilitated in 1988.

SAFAROV, Georgii Ivanovich (1891–27 July 1942). Born in family of Armenian architect. In Social Democratic circles, 1905. Joined RSDRP in 1908. Emigrated in 1910, secretary of Zurich section of Bolsheviks. Returned in 1912 to Petersburg; arrested. Fled to France. Deported from France to Switzerland in 1916. Returned to Russia with Lenin and Zinoviev in “sealed train” in 1917. Worked at *Pravda*. Member of Petersburg Committee. In Urals in 1918. In “military opposition,” 1919. In Turkestan, 1919–1920. Member of Ispolkom of the Comintern, 1922–1924. Candidate-member of CC, 1921–1925. Supporter of Zinoviev in “New Opposition” in 1925. From 1926 in United Opposition. Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three.” Expelled from party on 18 December 1927; arrested and exiled for four years to Achinsk. Broke with Opposition on 9 November 1928. Reinstated in party. 1930–1934, headed Eastern Bureau of Comintern. Arrested on 25 December 1934. Exiled for two years on 16 January 1935. Arrested on 16 December 1936 and sentenced to five years in prison. In 1938–1940, worked as provocateur for NKVD; named 111 alleged oppositionists. Shot on

27 July 1942. Rehabilitation rejected in 1957, 1958, and 1962; granted in 1991.

SAPRONOV, Timofei Vladimirovich (1887–28 September 1937). Born in peasant family. In revolutionary movement from 1905. Joined party in 1912. Arrested and exiled for revolutionary activity. In Moscow for October Revolution. 1918–1919, chairman of Executive Committee of Moscow Provincial Soviet; 1919–1920 in Kharkov. One of leaders of “Democratic Centralist” group, 1920–1921. Member of CC 1922–1923; member of Central Executive Committee, 1919–1924. Signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six.” In Left Opposition, 1923–1928. 1925–1926 member of Glavkontsesskom. Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Expelled as Trotskyist on 18 December 1927. From 1927, in prison and exile. Arrested in 1935, imprisoned in Verkhneuralsk political isolator from 1935 to August 1937. Sentenced by Military Collegium of Supreme Court and shot on 28 September 1937. Rehabilitated on 28 March 1990.

SEREBRIAKOV, Leonid Petrovich (30 May [11 June] 1888–1 February 1937). Born in worker’s family in Samara. Joined Bolsheviks in 1905. Participant in Revolution of 1905 in Lugansk. Party work in Donbass, Baku, Nikolaev, Odessa, Moscow, Samara, Petrograd, Tomsk. Delegate to Sixth Prague Conference in 1912. Repeated arrests. In army in Kostroma in 1917. Summer of 1917, secretary of Moscow party committee. 1919–1920, secretary of the Presidium of VTsIK and member of Revvoensovet of the Southern Front. 1919–1921, member of CC, Orgburo. One of leaders of Left Opposition; signed “Declaration of the Forty-Six,” “Declaration of the Eighty-Three,” and “Declaration of the One Hundred Twenty-One.” Expelled from party in December 1927. Exiled to Semipalatinsk in 1928. Left the Opposition in 1929 and reinstated in party in 1930. From 1931, head of roads and transport in the Sovnarkom. In August 1936, expelled from party. Arrested on 17 August 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial in January 1937. Sentenced to death on 30 January 1937 and shot on 1 February. Rehabilitated on 4

December 1986; 10 June 1987 reinstated in party. Daughter, Zorya Leonidovna Serebriakova (1923–), doctor of history, arrested in 1937 and exiled to Semipalatinsk. Rearrested in 1949. Rehabilitated in 1956.

SHKLOVSKY, Grigory Lvovich (1875–4 November 1937). In party from 1898. Arrested in 1903; exiled 1903–1904. Delegate to Third Congress of RSDRP in 1905. Knew Lenin, Krupskaya, Kamenev, Babushkin. Studied five years at Bern University, graduating as chemical engineer in 1915. Returned to Russia in 1917. Soviet diplomat in 1918. Consul in Hamburg 1922–1924. In Left Opposition, 1923–1928. Worked in chemical industry 1924–26. Expelled from party in 1927, reinstated in 1929. More work in chemical industry. Expelled from party on 16 May 1936. Sentenced to ten years in corrective labor camps on 14 November 1936. In prison at Solovki, 1936–1937. Sentenced to death on 10 October 1937 and executed on 4 November 1937 in Sandarmokh.

SHLYAPNIKOV, Aleksandr Gavrilovich (30 August 1885–2 September 1937). Born in carpenter's family. Worked in factories from 1898. Joined RSDRP in 1901; Bolshevik from 1903. Arrested in 1905; beaten by Black Hundreds. In prison until January 1907. 1908–1914, worked in factories in France, Germany, and England; fluent in French and German. In 1915, in CC. Member of Petrograd Committee of RSDRP, 1917–1918. People's Commissar of Labor in first Soviet government. In 1918–1919, candidate-member of CC. In RVS during Civil War. In 1920, worked in VTsSPS. In 1921–1922, member of CC. Opposed Trotsky during trade union debate. Headed Workers' Opposition with Kollontai, 1920–1922. In 1923, signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six." Trade representative in France; returned to USSR in 1925. Supported Left Opposition, 1926–1929. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927 for Trotskyism. Broke with Opposition in 1929 and reinstated in party. From 1923–1931, published *The Year 1917* in four volumes. In Gosplan, 1931–1933. In 1933, expelled from party. Exiled to Karelia in 1934. In 1935, exiled to Astrakhan for five years for having

belonged to Workers' Opposition. Arrested on 2 September 1936. Sentenced to death on 2 September 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1963 and posthumously reinstated in party in 1988.

SKRYPNIK, Nikolai Alekseevich (1872–7 July 1933). Born in Yekaterinoslav Province. Finished school in Kursk. Member of RSDRP from 1897. In 1900–1901 studied at Petersburg Polytechnic Institute. Expelled. Repeatedly arrested and exiled. Joined Bolsheviks in 1917. In 1917–1918, candidate member of CC. Many major posts in Ukraine, including in Cheka and Internal Affairs. In 1921–1933 member of Ukrainian CC. In 1923–1927, candidate-member of CC of RKP(b). In 1927–1933, member of CC. 1928–1933 member of Ispolkom of Comintern. From 1927 to 1933, Narkom of Enlightenment in Ukraine, active proponent of Ukainization. Opposed high rate of grain procurement in 1932–1933. Severely criticized from February 1933. On 7 July 1933, left session of Politburo in Kharkov and shot himself. Accused after death of national deviation. Author of more than six hundred works, publication of which was stopped. Rehabilitated in 1990.

SLEPKOV, Aleksandr Nikolaevich (1899–26 May 1937). Born in family of teacher. Member of party, 1919–1932. Journalist, historian, member of Right Opposition. Finished Sverdlov University in 1921, and Institute of Red Professors in 1924. From 1921, taught at the Communist University. Member of “Bukharin School.” Editor at *Pravda* and the journal *Bolshevik*, 1924–1928. Expelled from party on 21 October 1930 “for right-opportunist mistakes.” In March 1931, reinstated and teaches in Saratov. Expelled again in 1931, but reinstated in February 1932. Member of “Union of Marxist-Leninists.” Arrested on 26 September 1932, sentenced to three years in exile on 11 October 1932. On 16 April 1933, sentenced by OGPU to five years in corrective labor camp. Arrested on 17 December 1936; shot on 26 May 1937. Rehabilitated in June 1988.

SMILGA, Ivar Tennisovich (19 November [2 December] 1892–10 January 1937). Born in family of Latvian forester. Father was shot in 1906 by tsarist punitive expedition for participating in 1905 Revolution.

Joined RSDRP in January 1907. Studied at Moscow State University, 1910–1911. Many arrests. Exiled to Siberia in 1915. Returned to Petrograd in March 1917; elected to CC and sent to Finland. Worked closely with Lenin. On 25 October 1917, brought troops to Petrograd from Finland. From 1918–1921, in Revvoensovet on Western, Southern, Kavkaz, and Crimean fronts. From 1920, economic work. 1921–1923, in VSNKh. From 1923, deputy chairman of Gosplan. Director of Moscow Economic Institute, 1924–1927. Leading member of Left Opposition. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested in 1928 and exiled for four years to Minusinsk. Broke with Opposition in 1929. Reinstated in party in 1930. Economic work in VSNKh and Gosplan. In 1933, editor at Academia publishing house. Arrested on 1 January 1935 and sentenced to five years in Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Sentenced to death on 10 January 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1987.

SMIRNOV, Aleksandr Petrovich (27 August [9 September] 1877–10 February 1938). Born in peasant family. In strike at textile factory in 1896 in Tver; joined Union of Struggle for Emancipation of Working Class in 1896. Participated in Revolution of 1905. Arrested and exiled many times. Candidate member of CC in 1907 and 1912. 1922–1933, in CC. In 1924–1930, member of Orgburo. General secretary of Krestintern, 1923–1928. Secretary of CC, 1928–1930. In 1930–1933, candidate-member of Orgburo. In 1932, organized opposition group against Stalin. Expelled from party on 12 January 1933. Reinstated and then expelled again in December 1934. Arrested on 10 March 1937. Sentenced to death on 8 February 1938 and shot on 10 February. Rehabilitated in 1958.

SMIRNOV, Ivan Nikitich (1881–25 August 1936). Born in peasant family. Party member 1899–1927, 1930–1933. From 1893 worked on railway, then in factory in Moscow. Prior to 1917, arrested and exiled many times. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow in December 1905. In tsarist army in 1916–1917. 1918–1919, member of Revolutionary Military Council on Eastern Front and RMC of the

Republic. From August 1919, chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee. Member of CC, 1920–1921. From 1921, member of Petrograd Provincial Committee. July 1923–November 1927, People's Commissar of Post and Telegraph. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six." In Left Opposition, 1926–1929. Signed "Declaration of the Eighty-Three" in May 1927. Arrested in November 1927, expelled from party on 18 December 1927 and on 31 December 1927, exiled for three years. Declared departure from Opposition on 27 October 1929. 1929–1932 headed Building Trust in Saratov. In 1931, returned to activity in Trotskyist opposition; organized underground group in 1932. Arrested on 1 January 1933 and sentenced to five years in prison. In prison from 1 January 1933–August 1936. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. On 24 August 1936, sentenced to be shot. Executed on 25 August 1936. Rehabilitated in 1988.

SMIRNOV, Vladimir Mikhailovich (1887–26 May 1937). In party from 1907. Studied economics at Moscow University. Editor on several newspapers. Member of "left communists," February–July 1918. In 1918, one of the leaders of the "military opposition." In Red Army, 1918–1920. Member of Gosplan, 1921–1926. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six." In Left Opposition, 1925–1928. Signed "Declaration of the Eighty-Three" in May 1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested in 1928 and exiled, 1928–1930. Arrested in 1930, imprisoned in Suzdal and Verkhneuralsk isolators, through May 1937. On 26 May 1937, sentenced to death by Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet, and shot on same day. Rehabilitated on 16 November 1960.

SOKOLNIKOV, Grigorii Yakovlevich [Brilliant] (3 [15] August 1888–21 May 1939). Born in physician's family. In RSDRP from 1905. Participated in 1905 Revolution, including armed uprising in Moscow. In fall of 1906, organized students in Moscow with Bukharin. Arrested in 1907. Sentenced to exile in 1909. Escaped abroad. Studied law and economics in Paris, 1909–1914. Mastered six languages. Belonged to Bolshevik groups in France, then

Switzerland, 1914–1917. Returned with Lenin to Petrograd in 1917. Party work in Petrograd and Moscow 1917–1918. Signed Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918. Headed 9th Army in Civil War, 1918–1919. In CC, 1917–1919, 1922–1930; candidate-member of CC, 1930–1936. Candidate-member of Politburo, 1924–1925. Helped stabilize financial system 1921–1925. In “New (Leningrad) Opposition,” 1925–1926. Broke with Opposition in summer of 1927. Distanced himself from Right Opposition in 1928–1929. Ambassador to Britain, 1929–1932. From 1932, Deputy People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Arrested 26 July 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to ten years in prison on 30 January 1937. Murdered by NKVD on 21 May 1939 in Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Rehabilitated in 1988.

STEN, Yan Ernestovich (1899–20 June 1937). Born in the Vendenskii area of the Lifliand Province. Participated in revolutionary movement in Latvia. Studied at IKP, 1921–1924. Worked for Comintern, 1924–1927. Specialist in dialectics, epistemology, and social philosophy. On editorial board of *Under the Banner of Marxism*. Leading Deborinist. Full member of the Institute of Philosophy. Deputy director of Marx-Engels Institute, 1928–1930. Helped write the “Riutin Program”; expelled from party in 1932 for circulating it. In 1932 exiled for two years to Akmolinsk by decree of the Collegium of the OGPU. Upon return, worked on editorial board of *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Rearrested on 3 August 1936. Sentenced on 19 June 1937 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Shot on 20 June 1937. Buried at the Donskoy Cemetery. Rehabilitated on 7 July 1956 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.

STUKOV, Innokentii Nikolaevich (1887–1936). Son of a priest; studied at the Psychoneurological Institute. Bolshevik from 1905. Spent six years in prison, escaping in 1911. In 1917 member of the Moscow Regional Bureau. Elected to Constituent Assembly. From 1918 in Red Army. In 1919 chairman of the Ufa Revolutionary Committee. Editor of the newspaper *Soviet Siberia*. In 1920–1921 belonged to

Democratic Centralists. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six." From 1923, chief editor of the publishing house "Moskovskii rabochii." In 1926–1927, member of United Opposition. Expelled from party and exiled. In 1936, head of economic research sector of the People's Commissariat of Finance of the RSFSR. Arrested on 21 March 1936. Shot on 4 November 1936. Rehabilitated on 30 November 1957.

SULTAN-GALIEV, Mirsaid Khaidargalievich (13 July 1892–28 January 1940). Born into Tatar family. In 1911 finished Kazan Tatar Teachers' School. In May 1917 participated in All-Russian Muslim Congress in Moscow. In November 1917, joined Bolsheviks. From 1917, in leadership of Muslim section of Narkomnats. In July 1919 signed order outlawing agitation against Bashkir Republic. In Crimea in March 1921; objected to scale of Red Terror. Founder and leader of the Russian Muslim Communist Party. Taught at the Communist University of Toilers of the East. In 1923, arrested and expelled from party on Stalin's initiative. In 1924, freed from prison. Arrested in 1928 and sentenced for "national-deviationism" to ten years in camps. Freed in 1934 briefly, lived in exile in Saratov. Arrested in 1937 and shot in 1940. Rehabilitated in 1990.

SYRTSOV, Sergei Ivanovich (5 [17] July 1893–10 September 1937). Born in merchant family. Bolshevik from 1913. Arrest and exile. Returned to Petrograd after February Revolution. Leading party work in Rostov-na-Donu. During Civil War, Military Commissar of 12th Army. In 1920–1921, secretary of City Committee in Odessa. Participated in suppression of Kronstadt rebellion in 1921. Member of presidium of Communist Academy. 1926–1929, secretary of Siberian Kraikom. Supported Bukharin's policies. Member of CC, 1927–1930. Candidate-member of politburo, 1919–1930. From May 1929, chairman of Sovnarkom RSFSR. Opposed Stalin from 1929; joined with Lominadze to call for Stalin's removal as General Secretary at party plenum. In 1930, removed from CC and sent on party work to Siberia. From 1931, economic work. Arrested in 1937 by NKVD. Sentenced to death on 10 September 1937 and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1957 and 1959.

TOGLIATTI, Palmiro (26 March 1893–21 August 1964). From 1927 until his death, general secretary of Italian Communist Party; from 1928, member of Presidium. 1935–1943, member of Secretariat of ECCI. 1944–1945, Deputy Prime Minister. Died from a stroke in Yalta in 1964.

TOMSKY [Efremov], Mikhail Pavlovich (1880–22 August 1936). Born in working-class family. Joined party in 1904. Arrested and exiled for revolutionary activity. Member of Politburo, 1922–1930. Member of CC, 1919–1934. Headed VTsSPS, 1918–1919, 1922–1929; member of VTsIK, 1920–1931. Deputy Chairman of VSNKh, 1929–1932; chairman of Chemical Industry, 1932–1936. Headed OGIZ, 1932–1936. In “troika” with Bukharin and Rykov as leaders of Right Opposition. Committed suicide on 22 August 1936. Rehabilitated on 21 June 1988.

TSINTSADZE, Konstantin (Kote) Maksimovich (1887–24 November 1930). Joined RSDRP in 1904. Underground work in Transcaucasus. Several arrests and escapes. Afflicted with tuberculosis. After Sovietization of Georgia in 1921, member of Central Committee and TsIK. Chair of Georgian Cheka from April 1921 to November 1922. Opposed Stalin and Ordzhonikidze over autonomization plan. Joined Left Opposition in 1923. Expelled from party in 1927, arrested in 1928 and exiled. Published in *Bulletin of the Opposition*. Died from tuberculosis in exile.

UGLANOV, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (5 [17] December 1886–31 May 1937). Born in peasant family. Participated in Revolution of 1905. Became Bolshevik in 1907. Military service, 1908–1911. Trade union work in Petrograd, 1911–1914. In army, 1914–1916. Badly wounded in November 1914. Participated in February and October Revolutions. 1921–1922, candidate-member of CC; 1923–1930, member of CC. From 20 August 1924 to 29 April 1929, secretary of CC. In Orgburo, 1924–1929. With Riutin, led fight against Left Opposition in Moscow. 1928–1929, in Right Opposition. In 1932, supported Union of Marxist-Leninists. Expelled from party. In March 1933, arrested in connection with Bukharin school. In 1934,

reinstated in party. On 23 August 1936, expelled from party and arrested. On 31 May 1937 sentenced to death and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1989.

ULYANOVA, Mariya Ilyinichna (6 [18] February 1878–12 June 1937). Vladimir Lenin's younger sister. Finished gymnasium in Moscow; participated in student movement. In party from 1898. At University of Brussels 1898–1899. Party work in Novgorod, Moscow, Kiev, Saratov, and Petersburg. In Geneva 1904–1905. In Moscow 1910. Arrested in 1911 and in exile 1912–1914. From March 1917 to 1929 member of editorial board of *Pravda*. Worked closely with Bukharin. From 1929, prepared correspondence and material about Lenin at Lenin Institute. From 1932, member of CCC. Delegate to many party congresses. Buried on Red Square in Moscow.

URQUHART, John Leslie (11 April 1874–13 March 1933). A Scottish mining entrepreneur and millionaire who negotiated with the Soviet government for mineral and oil concessions in the 1920s.

VALENTINOV [Abramson], Grigory Borisovich (1896–? [no sooner than 1956]). Born in family of a tailor. In party from 1915. In army until 1917. In Red Army 1918–1920. Deputy editor of the newspaper *Trud*, 1922–January 1927; active in Left Opposition 1923–1929; one of authors of “Platform of the Thirteen”; signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927; main editor of *Trud* 1927, then deputy editor in 1928. Expelled from party as Trotskyist on 26 August 1927; expelled by CCC on 9 November 1927; departed from Left Opposition in July 1929. Reinstated in party on 21 March 1930. Sentenced by NKVD in 1936 to five years in prison, and completes sentence. Kept in exile. On 19 June 1946 sentenced to ten more years in prison, then extended to twenty-five years in prison on 25 June 1949. Released on 27 June 1956.

VARDIN, Ilya [Illarion Vissarionovich Mgeladze] (1890–21 July 1941); literary critic; joined RSDRP in 1906; member of the “October” group; leading collaborator in the journal *On Guard*; organizer of VAPP; author of many articles, including “Voronskyism Must Be

Liquidated" (1924). 1923–1924, opponent of Left Opposition; 1925–1927, active member of Left Opposition. Signed "Declaration of the Eighty-Three." Expelled from party in 1927; in 1935, arrested; sentenced to ten years in prison. Shot in 1941, rehabilitated in 1959.

VARGA, Eugen Samuilovich [Jenő Weisz] (1879–1964). Born in Budapest. Finished economic studies at Budapest University in 1909. In Social Democratic movement in Austria-Hungary and Germany. In 1919, People's Commissar of Finance in short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic. Emigrated to Soviet Union. Joined party in 1920. Active in Comintern. 1927–1947, Director of Institute of World Economy and World Politics in Moscow. Member of Presidium of Academy of Sciences. In disfavor from 1947; his institute was closed. After Stalin's death, signed "Letter of the Three Hundred" in 1955, criticizing Lysenkoism. From 1956, worked at Institute of World Economy and International Relations. A posthumous work criticizing the Soviet economic system was published in 1989.

VORONSKY, Aleksandr Konstantinovich (19 August 1884–13 August 1937). Born in family of village priest in Tambov. Studied at seminary. Joined RSDRP in 1904. Illegal work in Petersburg, including at Putilov works. Participated in Sveaborg uprising in 1906. Exiled for two years in Vologda. Party work in Vladimir, Moscow, Ekaterinoslav. Delegate to Sixth Prague Conference in 1912; arrested in Saratov, six months in prison. Exiled to north. Leading party work in Odessa 1917–1918; in Ivanovo 1918–1921, editor of newspaper *Rabochii krai*. Participated in suppression of Kronstadt uprising. Editor of major literary journal *Krasnaia nov'*, 1921–1927. Author of many works of literary criticism. Worked at Gosizdat, 1922. Member of Society of Old Bolsheviks from 1923. Signed "Declaration of the Forty-Six." In Left Opposition, 1923–1929. Expelled from party in 1929 for Trotskyism. Arrested by OGPU in 1929, exiled to Lipetsk, 1929–1930. Departed from Opposition in 1930; editor at "Khudlit," 1930–1935. Arrested 1 February 1937. Sentenced to death on 13 August 1937 and shot

same day. Rehabilitated 7 February 1957. Personally close to Lenin, Mariya Ulyanova, Trotsky, Serebriakov, Frunze, Goloshchekin.

VOROSHILOV, Kliment Efremovich (23 January [4 February] 1881–2 December 1969). Born in family of railway worker. Member of RSDRP from 1903. 1908–1917, party work in Baku, Petrograd, Tsaritsyn. Arrested many times and exiled. From 1918, military work. From November 1925–June 1934, Chairman of Revolutionary Military Council. 1934–1940, People's Commissar of Defense. Member of CC, 1921–1961, 1966–1969. Member of Politburo, 1926–1952. Fervent Stalinist. One of main organizers of Great Terror, signing shooting lists of thousands of party, soviet, and military figures. Many high posts after the war.

YAGODA, Genrikh Grigorievich (7 [19] November 1891–15 March 1938). Born in printer's family. 1907–1911, anarchist. In exile 1912–1913. At Putilov factory in 1913. In army, 1915–1916. Joined party in summer 1917. In Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1934–1936. Candidate-member of CC, 1930–1934; full member 1934–1936. One of early organizers of Great Terror, including First Moscow Trial. In January 1937, expelled from party. Arrested on 28 March 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 13 March and shot on 15 March 1938. Not rehabilitated.

YAKOVLEV, Yakov Arkadievich [Epshtein] (21 June 1896–29 July 1938). Born in Grodno in family of teacher. Member of party from 1913. Studied at Petrograd Polytechnic Institute. 1918–1920 CC in Ukraine. From 1921, party work in Moscow. 1922–1923, editorial board of *Red Virgin Soil*. 1924–1930, in CCC. 1923–1929, editor of *Peasants' Newspaper* and *Village Poor*. From 1926, chairman of RKI. From 8 December 1929–1934, People's Commissar of Agriculture. From July 1930, member of CC. Organized collectivization. From 1931, head of Kolkhoz Center. The famine of 1932–1933 occurred under his leadership. In 1936–1937, deputy chairman of CCC. Arrested on 12 October 1937 and shot on 29 July 1938. Rehabilitated in 1957.

YAROSLAVSKY, Emelian Mikhailovich [Gubelman] (19 February [3 March] 1878–4 December 1943). Born in Chita. Joined RSDRP in 1898. In 1901, abroad as *Iskra* correspondent. 1903, Petersburg Committee of RSDRP. Participated in Revolution of 1905. In 1907, arrested and exiled. From July 1917, in Moscow. In 1918, Left Communist. 1919–1921, candidate member of CC; 1921–1923, member of CC. In Orgburo. Editor for *Pravda*, *Bolshevik*, *Istori-Marksist* and *Bezbozhnik* [Atheist]. 1923–1934, in CCC. Candidate-member of ECCI. 1934–1939, Commission of Party Control. 1939–1943, member of CC. Opponent of Left Opposition. From the early 1930s, one of the most servile supporters of Stalin and major falsifier of party history. Author of many works on atheism and religion. Died from stomach cancer on 4 December 1943.

YEVDOKIMOV, Grigory Yeremeyevich. (1884–25 August 1936). Member of RSDRP from 1903. First arrested in 1908. Helped organize Red Guards in Petrograd in 1917. In Red Army during Civil War. Member of Central Committee, 1919–1920 and 1923–1927. Secretary of CC and member of Orgburo in 1926. Close supporter of Zinoviev and member of “New Opposition.” Active member of “United Opposition.” Signed “Declaration of the Eighty-Three” in May 1927. Removed from CC on 14 November 1927. Expelled from party in December 1927. Reinstated in 1928. Expelled from party and arrested on 8 December 1934. Tried for Kirov’s murder. On 16 January sentenced to eight years in prison. Tried at First Moscow Trial, sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot the next day. Rehabilitated on 13 June 1988.

YEZHOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (19 April [1 May] 1895–4 February 1940). In Red Army, 1919. Many party positions, from 1922. 1934–1935, deputy chairman of Party Control Commission; 1935–1939, secretary of CC; 1935–1939, chairman of Party Control Commission. In 1936–1938, People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs, replacing Yagoda. Organized Great Terror, in which 1.5 million arrested, about half of whom were shot, including 14,000 in NKVD (the secret police). Arrested on 10 April 1939. Sentenced to death on

3 February 1940, shot the next day. Rehabilitation refused in 1988 by Soviet Supreme Court.

ZAGORSKY, Vladimir Mikhailovich (3 [15] January 1883–25 September 1919). Born in Nizhny Novgorod. Began revolutionary activity as a student with Yakov Sverdlov. Joined RSDRP in 1901. Arrested in 1902 and exiled. In 1904, escaped to Geneva. Often met with Lenin. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow in December 1905. In 1908, emigrated to London. Returned to Saratov in 1910. Interned by Germany during First World War. Freed in 1918 after Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Representative of Soviet government in Germany in 1918. July 1918 became secretary of Moscow City Committee. Delegate to Eighth Party Congress. Killed by bomb thrown by anarchists into meeting of Moscow Committee at Leontiev Street on 25 September 1919.

ZINOVIEV, Grigory Yevseevich [Radomyslsky] (20 September 1883–25 August 1936). Born in family of dairy farmer. In RSDRP from 1901. Emigrated to Berlin in 1902, then Paris and Bern in 1903, where he met Lenin. Bolshevik from 1903. 1904, Bern University. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Petersburg. Back and forth between Russia and Europe. In CC from 1907. Returned on same train with Lenin to Petrograd on 3 April 1917. Opposed armed uprising on 10 [23]October. After October, many leading party positions, including head of party in Petrograd. Chairman of Ispolkom [Executive Committee] of the Comintern, 1919–1926. In 1921–1926, member of Politburo. Along with Kamenev, supported Stalin during struggle against Trotsky in 1922–1924. In “New Opposition,” 1925–1926. Joined United Opposition in April 1926. Removed from Ispolkom of the Comintern and Politburo. In 1927, expelled from CC, then from party and sent into exile. Capitulated to Stalin, departed from Opposition. In 1928, appointed rector of Kazan University. In October 1932, expelled from party, arrested and sentenced to four years exile. In 1933 reinstated in party. In April–July 1934, on editorial board of the journal *Bolshevik*. On 16 December 1934, arrested, expelled from party and sentenced to ten years in prison.

In Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot on 26 August. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988.

1. The information in these notes comes from a variety of sources. For members of the oppositions: *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989–1991; *Reabilitatsiia. Kak eto bylo*, vol. 1–3, Moskva : Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 2000–2004; K. V. Skorkin, *Obrecheny proigrat’, (Vlast’ i oppozitsiia 1922–1934)*, M.: VividArt, 2011; *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii. 1922–1940*, M.: Izd. “Istoricheskaiia literatura,” 2017. For philosophers: S. N. Korsakov, “Stanovlenie Instituta filosofii i sud’by filosofov pri stalinskom rezhime [Founding of the Institute of Philosophy and the Fate of Philosophers under the Stalinist Regime],” in: *Nash filosofskii dom* [Our House of Philosophy], Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2009, pp. 95–195. Whenever possible, information taken from the Russian version of *Wikipedia* has been checked against these and other sources.